



ROBERT BURNS
AND HIS
MASONIC CIRCLE

DUDLEY WRIGHT



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ROBERT BURNS AND HIS MASONIC CIRCLE

BY

DUDLEY WRIGHT

AUTHOR OF

"MASONIC PIONEERS" "ETHICS OF FREEMASONRY" ETC.



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ROBERT BURNS AND HIS MASONIC CIRCLE

FOREWORD

IN a humble cottage on the banks of the Doon, in the district of Kyle, about two miles to the south of the town of Ayr, Robert Burns was born on 25th January 1759. His father was then a peasant farmer; of him the poet wrote:

“ My father was a farmer upon the Carrick border, O,
And carefully he reared me in decency and order, O;
He bade me act a manly part, though I had ne'er a
farthing, O,
For without an honest, manly heart no man was worth
regarding, O.”

That father was, during his life, the victim of many reverses and misfortunes. The cottage in which the poet was born was a clay-built and thatched one, on the highway which leads from Ayr to the southern part of the county. The

“auld clay biggin’” was afterwards converted into a neat, whitened public-house and, for some years, was kept by a Mr. John Goudie, who, with his wife, knew the poet intimately. The cottage consisted of two rooms only, one of which served as kitchen: it was in this room that Robert Burns was born. There was then no ceiling to the humble apartment—simply the reverse of the thatched roof.

“This is the cottage as it was of old,
The window four small panes and, in the wall,
The box-bed, where the first daylight did fall
Upon their new-born infant: narrow fold
And poor, when times were hard and winds were cold,
As they were still to him. And now, close by,
Above Corinthian columns mounted high,
The famed Choragic Tripod shines in gold.”

The cottage is now the property of the Ayr Burns Monument Trustees, by whom it is set apart as a museum for the relics of the poet. In the interior of the kitchen is shown the recess where the poet was born.

The father, William Burness—for so he spelled his name—is described, by one who knew him towards the latter end of his life, as being “above the ordinary stature, thin and bent down with labour. His countenance was serious and

expressive and the scanty locks on his head were grey. He was of a religious turn of mind and, as is usual among the Scottish peasantry, a good deal conversant in speculative theology." He compiled for his own use *A Manual of Religious Belief for the Instruction of Children*. This remained in manuscript form until 1875, when it was published as a Burns memento. The manual is curious for its quaint phraseology.

William Burness looked upon his son, Robert, as the best reader in the house and used to call upon him to read the Bible to the rest of the family.

Agnes Brown, the poet's mother, was the daughter of Gilbert Brown, a Carrick farmer in a small way. She was married to William Burness in 1756; he took his bride to the "auld clay biggin'" he had built for himself. Little is known of the mother: the poet seems to have written nothing about her—if he did, it has been lost. It is, however, known that he loved her deeply and sincerely and that he contributed to her maintenance until he passed away. James Muir has written of her :

" Oh, mother of the gifted bard,
Whom Scotia holds her gifted son,
Deep in thy spirit, waiting birth,
The honours lay that he has won,

'Thy source thou hadst in nature wilds,
Like some wee rivulet 'mong the hills,
But now in him thy eldest born,
Thy untaught spirit the world fills."

Burns, in his boyhood, learned grammar, writing, arithmetic, a little mathematics, some Latin and a smattering of French. He contrived, in his earlier years, to obtain some knowledge of many English classical works and of the ancient poets, the latter by means of translations. He had only attained his fifteenth year when he made his essay into poetry, the subject of his muse being a comely lass of the name of Nelly, who was associated with him, after the usual fashion, in the harvest-rig.

Of the poet, in later life, Dr. James Currie has given the following description; but too much credence cannot be placed in this statement, since Currie only met the poet once, for a few minutes, in a Dumfries street :

" He was nearly five feet ten inches in height and of a form that indicated agility as well as strength. His well-raised forehead, shaded with black, curling hair, indicated extensive capacity. His eyes were large, dark, full of ardour and intelligence. His face was well formed and his countenance uncommonly interesting and ex-

pressive. His mode of dressing, which was often slovenly and a certain fullness and bend in his shoulders, characteristic of his original calling, disguised, in some degree, the natural symmetry and elegance of his form. The appearance of Burns was strikingly indicative of the character of his mind. On a first view his physiognomy had a certain air of coarseness, mingled, however, with an expression of deep penetration and of calm thoughtfulness, approaching to melancholy. There appeared, in his first manner and address, perfect ease and self-possession, but a stern and almost supercilious elevation, not, indeed, incompatible with openness and affability, which, however, bespoke a mind conscious of superior talents."

Sir Walter Scott, a brother poet and a Brother Mason, was a hero-worshipper of Burns. Scott was a boy of sixteen when he met Burns at the house of one of his friends. He had read his poems and desired eagerly to meet their author. He describes him as a strong and robust person, with manners rustic but not clownish; a kind of dignified plainness and simplicity, which derived part of its effect, perhaps, from one's knowledge of his extraordinary talents. Scott adds that had he not known who he was, he

would have taken him for a very sagacious country farmer of the old Scottish school ; that is, the “douce guidman” who held his own plough. There was a strong expression of shrewdness in all his lineaments, the eye indicated the poetical character and temperament. It was large and of a cast which *glowed* when he spoke with feeling or interest. Scott says that he never saw such another eye in a human head, though he had seen the most distinguished men of the time.

Caroline Fox, in her *Journals*, has left on record an interesting account of an afternoon spent with Thomas Carlyle, in the course of which she refers to Burns in the following words :

“ Burns was the last of our heroes and here our Scotch patriot was in his element. Most graphically did he sketch some passages in the poet’s life ; the care with which his good father educated him, teaching him to read his Bible and to write. The family was in great poverty and so deeply did anxiety about rearing his children prey on the mind of old William Burns, that he died of a broken heart. He was a sincere man and, like every sincere man, he lived not in vain. He acted up to the precepts of

John Knox and trained his son to immortality. When Robert's talents developed themselves, the rich and the great espoused his cause, constantly sent for him when they would be amused and drew him out of his simple habits, greatly to his own woe. He could not stand long this perpetual lionizing unblighted ; it broke him up in every sense and he died. What a tragedy is that of Robert Burns ! his father dying of a broken heart from dread of over-great poverty ; the son from contact with the great, who would flatter him for a night or two and then leave him unfriended. Amusement they must have, it seems, at any expense, though one would have thought they were sufficiently amused in the common way ; but no, they were like the Indians we read of, whose grandees ride in their palanquins at night and are not content with torches carried before them, but must have instead fireflies stuck at the end of spears.”

Burns is described by Professor Craik as “ the greatest peasant poet that has ever appeared. Nothing in Horace, in the way of curious felicity of phrase, excels what we find in the compositions of this Ayrshire ploughman.”

THE MASONIC CAREER OF ROBERT BURNS

BURNS was initiated into the mysteries of Freemasonry in Lodge St. David, Tarbolton, on 4th July 1781, when in the twenty-third year of his age; and the Craft at once became to him an important means of relaxation and social enjoyment. The Craft, at that time, included nearly all the men of mark in the country. The minute recording his initiation reads :

“ Sederant for July 4th.

“ Robert Burns in Lochly was entered an apprentice. JOPH NORMAN, MR.”

Lockhart says that Burns was introduced to the Lodge by John Rankine.

Nine days prior to Burns's initiation, a union—or, as it was termed, a “ junction ”—was effected between the two Tarbolton Lodges—St. David, 174, and St. James, 178—when it was agreed that the united Lodge should bear the name of St. David. Lodge St. James had been constituted

by a Charter from Kilwinning in 1771; and Lodge St. David had been formed by a number of disaffected members of Tarbolton Kilwinning, with a few others, in 1773.

The house in Tarbolton, in which, from 1784, the meetings of Lodge St. James were held, still stands in a street which has since been named "Burns Street." In Burns's time it was a village alehouse and the poet used to attend the dancing classes which were held in a small hall attached to the building. Within recent years it has been renovated and slated.

Some writers have stated that Burns was initiated by one, Alexander Wood, a tailor of Tarbolton, but this name does not appear in the *Leger Book* or list of members of Lodge St. David at that period.

Burns was passed and raised on 1st October 1781, and the minute on that occasion reads :

"Sederant, October 1st, 1781.

" Robert Burns in Lochly was passed and raised, Henry Cowan being Master."

Lockhart says that immediately after his initiation he removed to Irvine, where he resided until the end of the following February.

In the following December there was again a

disruption and the seceders reconstituted the old Lodge St. James, Burns also becoming a member; and the Lodge became the centre of attraction to the Craft in the immediate neighbourhood. The Lodge has still in its keeping the *Minute Book* containing three minutes entirely in Burns's handwriting and twenty-five other minutes signed by him as Depute Master, to which office the poet was elected three years after his initiation—on 27th July 1784—the choice of the Brethren within so short a time being, in itself, evidence of the zeal and assiduity with which he had carried out his Masonic duties. He was appointed to that position, coveted by many, shortly after he and his brother, Gilbert, had entered upon possession of the farm at Mossiel, about three miles distant. He held the office until St. John's Day, 1788 and attended in the capacity of Depute Master: in 1785, on 29th June, 20th July, 2nd and 18th August, 15th September, 26th October, 10th November, 1st and 7th December; in 1786, on 7th January, 1st March, 25th May, 7th, 15th, 24th, and 29th June, 18th August, 5th October and 10th November; in 1787, on 4th and 25th July; and in 1788, on 7th and 23rd May, 16th June, 21st October and 11th November. On the two

last dates he made flying visits from Ellisland, and 11th November is his last recorded appearance at the Lodge.

The first candidate initiated by Burns appears to have been Matthew Hall, in his day a celebrated violin player, patronized by the Earl of Eglinton. He was the proud possessor of a bass fiddle, which was presented to him by the Countess of Eglinton. He was in great demand as a violinist throughout Ayrshire.

The meeting on 25th May 1786 was eleven days subsequent to the assumed date of the poet's parting with Mary Campbell.

The Lodge minutes of 14th June 1786 contain a curious entry which reads as follows :

“ It was proposed by the Lodge that, as they much wanted a Lodge-room, a proposal be laid before the heritors, who are intending to build a steeple here, that the Lodge shall contribute to the building of a Lodge-room here as the basis of that steeple and that, from the funds of the Lodge, they allow fifteen pounds, besides what will be advanced from the particular friends of the Lodge : in order that this proposal be properly laid before the heritors, five persons—namely, the Right Worshipful Master, Brother M’Math, Brother Burns, Brother Woodrow, Brother

William Andrew—are appointed to meet on Saturday at one o'clock to draw up a proposal to lay before the heritors on Friday first."

On 30th November 1786 there was a public daylight Masonic procession, in which Burns took part. The Brethren marched to St. Andrew's Church, Newtown, Edinburgh, where a sermon was preached by Rev. James Wright, *A.M.*, of Maybole, the Grand Chaplain in 1786-87, well known by the name of "Brotherly Love," in consequence of the publication of a sermon on that subject, which he had preached before the Lodge of Kilwinning some time previously, in which he had laid special stress on that Masonic virtue. This second sermon was afterwards published under the title of *The Union of Love to God and Love to Man*. James Wright, it may be mentioned, was one of the bold ministers of the period who received sundry unwelcome attentions from the ecclesiastical courts. The harvest of 1807 had been very unsatisfactory, in consequence of the bad weather; but there came a week-end with a drying wind, which meant a favourable opportunity for housing the corn. After morning service on the Sabbath, the preacher suggested advantage might be taken of the temporary change of weather to save the

crops and several of his parishioners adopted his suggestion. But this was “ Sabbath-breaking ” with a vengeance and the minister who gave such advice was hauled before the ecclesiastical courts by the District Synod, although that body eventually dismissed the case. When James Wright passed away in 1812, his people erected a monument over his grave “ as a token to posterity as a grateful recollection of his many virtues.”

The meeting of the Lodge at which Dugald Stewart made the acquaintance of the poet was held at Mauchline on 25th July 1787 and was, as a matter of fact, irregular, as the charter did not empower the members to hold a meeting outside Tarbolton. Burns, however, in his Masonic zeal, held Lodges even in his own house, for the purpose of admitting new members into the Order. At that time the regular meetings of the Lodge were held at an inn, known as “ The Cross Keys,” Tarbolton, which was kept by a person of the name of Manson. The building still stands and has been renovated, but the Lodge now meets in a commodious hall of its own. Among its treasured possessions are the chair in which Burns sat as Depute Master, the gavel he used in ruling the Lodge, the *Minute Book* in which are records written and

signed by him. The candlesticks in use at the time he was Depute Master are preserved and are in use at the present time. There is also kept as a relic, in excellent condition, the following letter which he wrote, on one occasion, when he was away in Edinburgh and was prevented from attending a certain meeting :

“MEN AND BRETHREN,—I am truly sorry it is not in my power to be at your quarterly meeting. If I must be absent in body, believe me I shall be present in spirit. I suppose those who owe us monies by bill or otherwise will appear: I mean those we summoned. If you please, I wish you would delay prosecuting defaulters till I come home. The Court is up and I will be home before it sits down. In the meantime to take a note of who appear and who do not of our faulty debtors will be right in my humble opinion and those who confess debts and crave days I think we should spare them. Farewell!

“‘ Within your dear mansion may wayward contention
Or withered envy ne’er enter;
May secrecy round be the mystical bound,
And brotherly love be the center.’

“ROBT. BURNS.

“EDIN. 23 Aug. 1787.”

The defaulters referred to were not, as might at first be supposed, members in arrear with their subscriptions to the Lodge. Lodge St. James, in common with many other Lodges at the time, had been victimized by members borrowing money upon the guarantee of bills, which, not being met at maturity, had caused depletion of the Lodge funds. In 1786 the Brethren had decided that they would press for payment of these overdue amounts and it was in reference to these proposed proceedings that the poet interposed to prevent the resolution being put into execution, as he thought, too rigorously. Many Scottish Lodges were lending societies in those days. The letter, framed with glass on both sides, so as to show the addressing of the epistle, is kept in the Lodge-room, beyond the walls of which it is not permitted to be taken.

The Lodge is, also, in possession of a letter from Sir Walter Scott, as follows :

“ SIR,—I am much gratified by the sight of the portrait of Robert Burns. I saw that distinguished poet only once and that many years since; and, being a bad marker of likenesses and recollecter of faces, I should, in an ordinary

case, have hesitated to offer an opinion upon the resemblance, especially as I make no pretension to judge of the fine arts. But Burns was so remarkable a man that his features remained impressed on my mind as I had seen him only yesterday and I could not hesitate to recognize this portrait as a striking resemblance of the poet, though it had been presented to me amid a whole exhibition.—I am, Sir,

“ Your obedient servant,

“ WALTER SCOTT.

“ EDINBURGH, 14 November [1829].”

When the conviction had been forced upon the poet that his farming speculation at Mossiel would not be successful, he decided to leave Scotland altogether. He secured a post in Jamaica and bade farewell to the Brethren of Lodge St. James in the following words :

“ Adieu ! a heart-warm, fond adieu !
Dear Brothers of the Mystic Tie !
Ye favoured, ye enlighten'd few,
Companions of my social joy !
Tho' I to foreign lands must hie,
Pursuing Fortune's slidd'ry ba',
With melting heart and brimful eye,
I'll mind you still, tho' far awa'.

Oft have I met your social band
 And spent the cheerful, festive night ;
 Oft honoured with supreme command,
 Presided o'er the Sons of Light ;
 And by that Hieroglyphic Bright,
 Which none but Craftsmen ever saw !
 Strong Mem'ry on my heart shall write
 Those happy scenes when far awa'.

May Freedom, Harmony and Love,
 Unite you in the Grand Design,
 Beneath th' Omniscient Eye above—
 The glorious Architect Divine—
 That you may keep th' Unerring Line,
 Still rising by the Plummet's Law,
 Till ORDER bright completely shine,
 Shall be my pray'r when far awa'.

And you, FAREWELL ! whose merits claim
 Justly the Highest Badge to wear !
 Heav'n bless your honour'd, noble NAME,
 To Masonry and Scotia dear.
 A last request permit me here,
 When yearly ye assemble a',
 One round, I ask it with a tear,
 To him, the Bard that's far awa'."

It is said that, in reading this poem to the members of the Lodge, when he got to the last stanza, the tears were rolling down the cheeks of many of the Brethren. Happily the eternal disgrace which would have rested upon Scot-

land, had want compelled Burns to leave his native land, was saved—principally through the Masonic tie. It was about this time that Burns wrote to a friend—James Smith: “I have yet fixed on nothing with respect to the serious business of life. I am, as usual, a rhyming, Mason-making, rattling, aimless, idle fellow.”

William Petrie, who was Serving Brother to the Lodge during the greater part of the time when Burns was a member, was once asked by one who visited him in 1845 if he remembered Robert Burns. Notwithstanding his great age, he exclaimed with vigour: “Rabbie Burns ! Mind Rabbie ! I’ll no’ forget him, puir fellow ! Eh, but he was the life o’ the Lodge ! ”

The Secretary of the Tarbolton Lodge from August 1782 until some time in 1787 was John Wilson, the local schoolmaster, whom Burns has made famous as “Dr. Hornbrook,” in the poem “Death and Dr. Hornbrook.” Gilbert Burns has left it on record that Robert was at a Masonic meeting one night in Tarbolton when the village dominie made an ostentatious display of his medical skill, which led to the appellation and the poem. Chambers’s account of the incident is as follows :

“ In the seed-time of 1785—the date is given

on the poet's own authority—Burns attended a Masonic meeting at Tarbolton, at which one of the Brethren present was John Wilson, schoolmaster of the parish. To eke out a living, as Gilbert tells us, Wilson set up a shop of grocery goods. Having accidentally fallen in with some medical books and become most hobby-horsically attached to the study of medicine, he had added the sale of a few medicines to his little trade. He had got a shop-bill printed, at the bottom of which, overlooking his own capacity, he had advertised that 'Advice would be given in common disorders at the shop gratis.' On this occasion he made a somewhat ostentatious display of his medical attainments. It is said that he and Burns had a dispute, in which the schoolmaster paraded his therapeutics too offensively. Be this as it may, going home that night, Burns conceived and partly composed his poem: 'Death and Dr. Hornbrook.' 'These circumstances,' adds Gilbert, 'he related to me when he repeated the verses next afternoon, as I was holding the plough and he was letting the water off the field for me.' "

A writer in *The Times* of 16th October 1928 says that Wilson "had received a good education

at the University of Glasgow—his notes made in the class of logic are now in a public library—though he had not graduated, owing to family misfortunes and possessed a smattering of scientific knowledge. His pills and potions and his general skill as a ‘doctor’ were esteemed locally. There is no doubt that Wilson was somewhat vain of his medical knowledge and delighted to exercise it.”

The author of that article avers that the poem ruined Wilson, but that seems improbable, as friendly correspondence between Burns and Wilson took place as late as 1790 and the latter was still session-clerk at Tarbolton as late as 1793.

Hugh Andrew, who, in Burns’s time acted as whipper-in to General Montgomery, was a Steward in the Tarbolton Lodge; to him Burns has made reference in “*The Twa Dogs*”:

“ Our whipper-in, wee blastit wonner,
Puir worthless elf, he eats a dinner
Better than ony tenant man
His honour has in a’ the lan’.”

Andrew, in 1833, was still living in a cottage in the Coilsfield Woods, where Mary Campbell, the subject of the poem, “*To Mary in Heaven*,” served as a byres-woman or dairymaid.

The Lodge also treasures the silver badge referred to in his "Farewell to the Brethren of the St. James's Lodge, Tarbolton." The Lodge Bible, which bears the date of 1775, was one of the poet's possessions. It was purchased by the Lodge on 29th July 1786, the minute reading :

"Bible cost 13s., 'lettering,' *i.e.* the painted name of the Lodge on the cover, cost 3s."

It, perhaps, should here be mentioned that it was on 1st March 1786, when the poet's brother, Gilbert, took the second and third degrees, when the two brothers first signed their names as "Burns" instead of "Burness." Until that date the poet had always signed as "Robert Burness." Chambers says that his first notable deviation from "Burness" was in the poem "Mossiel," which was probably taken to suit the necessities of rhyme and that he made the final change to "Burns" on 14th April 1786.

In 1843 Lodge St. David was declared dormant by the Grand Lodge of Scotland, but, after a lapse of nearly thirty-five years, its charter was restored and the Lodge was resuscitated on 15th January 1877.

The rules of Lodge St. James present some interesting entries, which are indicative of the customs prevailing in the time of Burns. For

instance, it is therein laid down that silence shall be maintained under a penalty of twopence. Every transgression of a rule appears to have been followed by a penalty in the shape of a fine or some other mode of punishment. Thus : “ Any speaker who shall deviate from the subject in debate has a like penalty inflicted upon him and any Brother using another affrontively shall be extruded.” More severe in its consequences is the “ holding up of funds belonging to the Lodge by a Brother,” this offence being visited by exclusion of the Brother from the Lodge “ for ever.” Another rule reads : “ Whosoever shall break a drinking-glass shall be liable to the instant payment of sixpence sterling for it and to the same sum for every other he may break before he leave the room or company.” If any Brother failed to attend the meeting within an hour of the time fixed for opening the proceedings, he was fined twopence, but well-grounded reasons “ will excuse the transgressors ” from such penalty. It was also provided that :

“ If any Brother be so unfortunate as to have disordered his senses by strong liquors and, thereby, rendered himself incapable of behaving decently, peaceably and kindly towards those around him, such Brother coming to the Lodge

in that condition to the disturbance and disgust of his Brethren shall be prudently ordered away to some place of safety in the meantime and, at the next meeting, shall submit to such censure and admonition from the Chair and to such a fine, inflicted by the Lodge on him, as to them may appear proper to punish the crime and to deter him from it in all time coming."

When consideration is paid to the state of society and the habits prevailing at that time, the ideal can only be regarded as a high one. The members even went further and set forth the ideals of the Lodge in the following words :

"Whereas a Lodge always means a company of worthy men and circumspect, gathered together in order to promote charity, friendship, civility and good neighbourhood : it is enacted that no member of this Lodge shall speak slightly, detractingly, or calumniously of any of his Brethren behind their backs, so as to damage them in their professions or reputations, without any certain grounds ; any member committing such an offence must humble himself by asking on his knees the pardon of such person as his folly or malice hath grieved. Obstinate refusal to comply with the finding of the Brethren assembled shall be met by expulsion

from the Lodge, with every mark of ignominy and disgrace that is consistent with justice and Freemasonry."

These various rules were adopted on the formation of the Lodge, but there was one addition made on 7th December 1785, which is signed "Robert Burns, D.M.," which reads :

"Whoever stands as Master shall be bound at the entry of a new member for that member's dues if the money is not paid or security such as the Lodge shall approve is given."

It is clear from other minutes which mention orders given for drinking-glasses that the Lodge meetings were, to a large extent, of a convivial character.

The Tarbolton Lodge was the subject on which Brother A. Glass of the Ayr Operative Lodge, 138, some years ago wrote the following poem, which appeared in *The Freemason* of 5th August 1871 :

"I've sat beneath the old rooftree
Where Burns oft spent the festive night,
As happy as a king could be
Amang the honoured 'Sons of Light.'
To me it was as Mecca's shrine
To ardent Eastern devotee,
Where Scotia's minstrel passed langsyne
So many hours of joyous glee.

What hallowed recreations throng
 Around that spot, endeared to fame ?
What happy scenes of love and song
 Are conjured up in Burns's name ?
What mystic fane, however grand,
 Can with the lowly Lodge compare,
Where, 'honoured with supreme command,'
 Presided Fame's eternal heir ?

Along the corridors of Time
 For ever sweep his deathless lays,
And Scotia's sons, in every clime,
 Sing sweetly of their native braes ;
In fancy rove 'whaur Lugar flows,'
 Where 'hermit Ayr' delights to stray,
Or 'bonny Doon' in beauty goes
 Past hoary, haunted Alloway.

Nor sylvan bower, nor tiny flower,
 That blooms where wimplin' burnie strays,
But he possessed the innate power
 To twine around them fadeless bays.
In Nature's Lodge, supreme and grand,
 He sat as Master in the chair,
And shed a glory o'er the land
 That time nor change can e'er impair.

His was the keen, prophetic eye,
 Could see afar the glorious birth
Of that Great Power, whose mystic tie
 Shall make 'One Lodge' of all the earth ;
Shall usher in the reign of light,
 'Ring out the false, ring in the true,'
Cause man to walk 'square' and 'upright,'
 And wisdom's path of peace pursue."

On 27th March 1786, Burns was introduced by Gavin Hamilton to Lodge Loudoun Kilwinning Newmilns, 51, and admitted as a joining member. The minute of his admission reads :

“ Much to the satisfaction of the Lodge, Mr. Robert Burns, Mossiel, Mauchline, introduced by the Right Worshipful, was admitted as a member of this Lodge.”

This was the first Lodge out of Tarbolton that Burns joined. It was purely Kilwinning in its origin, holding its warrant, dated 13th February 1747, direct from Mother Kilwinning, and it did not come within the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of Scotland until 1818. It is suggestive that a merchant in Newmilns made himself responsible for the payment of the poet's dues.

On 26th October 1786, Burns was made an honorary member of Lodge St. John, 22, Kilmarnock. This Lodge received its charter from Mother Kilwinning on 14th November 1734, its principal petitioner being William, fourth Earl of Kilmarnock, afterwards beheaded on Tower Hill for the part he took in the attempted restoration of the House of Stuart, when all the honours attached to his name were attainted. Originally the Lodge was entirely operative. The minute

of the Lodge on the date of Burns's affiliation to it concludes :

“ Robert Burns, poet, from Mauchline, a member of St. James, Tarbolton, was made an honorary member of the Lodge.”

This was the first Lodge to distinguish Burns with the description of “ poet ” and to accord him the distinction of honorary membership. The Lodge met on premises which afterwards formed part of the old Commercial Inn, in Craft Street, Kilmarnock, demolished some years ago in order to make room for the offices of Messrs. John Walker & Company, the well-known whisky merchants.

Burns visited the Canongate Kilwinning Lodge, Edinburgh, on 7th December 1786, on which night the Earl of Errol, the Hon. William Gordon, who would but for the attainder have been Viscount Kenmure and Lord of Lochinvar, John Newall of Earlston, and Captain Gillespie were initiated. William Campbell of Fairfield was also affiliated. The last-named had officiated as Grand Warden at the laying of the foundation stone of the Harbour of Ayr and it is not improbable that he had met Burns in the Ayr Lodges.

In January 1787, at Edinburgh, in the Lodge

Edinburgh St. Andrew, 48, Burns was toasted by the Grand Master in the words : “ Caledonia and Caledonia’s Bard, Robert Burns,” to which toast the poet responded. Writing to his friend, Ballantine, Burns described the occasion in the following words :

“ I went to a Mason Lodge yesternight, where the Most Worshipful Grand Master Charters [Charteris] and all the Grand Lodge of Scotland visited. The meeting was numerous and elegant : the different Lodges about town were present in all their pomp. The Grand Master, who presided with great solemnity and honour to himself as a gentleman and a Mason, among other general toasts, gave ‘ Caledonia and Caledonia’s Bard, Robert Burns,’ which rang through the whole assembly with multiplied honours and repeated acclamations. As I had no idea such a thing would happen, I was down-right thunderstruck and, trembling in every nerve, made the best return in my power. Just as I had finished, some of the Grand Officers said, so loud that I could hear, with a most comforting accent : ‘ Very well, indeed ! ’ which set me something to rights again.”

Charteris was the 36th Grand Master of

Scotland and held office in 1786 and 1787. During his Grand Mastership—in 1787—he succeeded to the title of Lord Elcho, his father having inherited the Earldom of Wemyss. He did not live to succeed to the Earldom, as he predeceased his father by ten months. He belonged to Lodge Haddington St. John and was also an affiliated member of Canongate Kilwinning Lodge, which he joined on 3rd March 1779. In each of these two Lodges he carried a motion to the effect that the members of the one should be regarded as full members of the other.

On 1st February 1787, Burns became a member of Lodge Canongate Kilwinning, 2, into which he was introduced by the Hon. Henry Erskine, the famous advocate, who became Master of the Lodge in 1780. This Lodge possesses the most ancient Lodge-room in the world. It is one of the most active Lodges of the present day, keeping alive the traditions of nearly eight hundred years. In the chapel of this Lodge-room is a beautiful old organ with a wonderful sweet tone. It was built in 1754 and is probably the oldest organ in Scotland as well as being the only instrument in existence on which the songs of Burns were played in the presence of their

writer. The entry in the *Minute Book* recording the admission of Burns is as follows :

“ The Right Worshipful Master having observed that Brother Burns was present in the Lodge, who is well known as a great poetic writer and for the late publication of his works which have been universally Commended, Submitted that he should be assumed a member of this Lodge, which was unanimously agreed and he was assumed accordingly.

“ ALEX^R FERGUSON, M.

“ CHAS. MORE, D.M.

“ JO. MILLAR, J.W.

Alexander Fergusson, of Craigdarroch, was one of the most prominent and distinguished Freemasons of his day. He was Senior Grand Warden of Scotland in 1783 and elected Master of Canongate Kilwinning Lodge, 2, in 1784 and from 1785 to 1796, was Provincial Grand Master for the Southern District of Scotland. His name has been immortalized by Burns as the hero and winner of the famous Whistle contest : “ Craigdarroch, so famous for wit, worth, and law ” and he has been spoken of elsewhere as “ a gentleman of superior attainments and of amiable disposition.”

Chas. More, the Depute Master, who signed this minute, was also present at the meeting of the Lodge in June 1815, when he seconded a resolution then passed concerning the Lodge's subscription towards the mausoleum of the poet.

There is a story which runs that, exactly a month afterwards—on 1st March 1787—Burns paid a second visit to Lodge Canongate Kilwinning, when he was invested as Poet Laureate of this famous Lodge. To corroborate this story there is in existence a well-known painting of the supposed scene, which has been many times reproduced. The picture, however, is only an imaginary one, for one of the characters depicted as being present—Grose, the famous antiquarian—did not become a Freemason until 1791. James Marshall, a member of the Craft, published in 1846 a small volume entitled *A Winter with Robert Burns*, in which he gave a full account of the supposed investiture, with biographical data of the Brethren stated to have been present on that occasion. Robert Wylie, also, in his *History of Mother Lodge Kilwinning* (of which he was Secretary), published in 1878, has repeated the story and added that “Burns was very proud of the honour”; while Dr. Rogers,

in *The Book of Robert Burns* (vol. i. p. 180), has also repeated the story, giving the date of the event as 25th June 1787, adding the information that Lord Torphichen was then Depute Master, and that, in compliment to the occasion and as a token of personal regard, on the following day, he dispatched to the poet at his lodgings in the Lawnmarket a handsome edition of Spenser's works, which the poet acknowledged in a letter.

There *was* a meeting of Lodge Canongate Kilwinning on 1st March 1787, the minute of which is in existence, but it contains no reference to the investiture of Burns as Poet Laureate of the Lodge. It reads as follows :

“ St. John’s Chapel, 1st March 1787. The Lodge being duly constituted it was reported that since last meeting, R. Dalrymple Esq., F. T. Hammond Esq., R. A. Maitland Esq., were entered apprentices ; and the following brethren passed and raised : R. Sinclair Esq., A. M’Donald Esq., C. B. Clive Esq., Captain Dalrymple, R. A. Maitland Esq., F. T. Hammond Esq., Mr. Clavering, Mr. M’Donald, Mr. Millar, Mr. Hine and Mr. Gray, who all paid their fees to the Treasurer. No other business being before the meeting, the Lodge adjourned.”

That minute is signed by Alexr. Fergusson as Master, Chas. More as Depute Master, and Jo. Millar as J.W.

It is not a pleasing task to dispel such a happy delusion, but it must be admitted that the investiture certainly did not take place on that occasion, when there is no record that Burns was even present. Had the investiture taken place, it would certainly have been recorded on the minutes, especially when regard is had to the fact that his very admission to the Lodge a month previously was made the subject of so special a note. There were only three meetings of the Lodge held in the 1786-87 session, and at one of these only—that of the night of his admission as a joining member—is there any record of the presence of Robert Burns. But, did not Burns call himself Laureate? some one may ask. Certainly he did, particularly in the following stanza :

“ To please you and praise you,
Ye ken your Laureate scorns ;
The prayer still you share still
Of grateful minstrel Burns.”

But those words were written on 3rd May 1786, before the date of his admission into Lodge Canongate Kilwinning.

Canongate Kilwinning possesses a Master Mason's apron of Burns's Mother Lodge—the first apron worn by the poet after the completion of his admission into the Order. After being made a member of the Lodge, he added the title "Bard" to his signature. It is of interest to note that James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, was a Poet Laureate of Lodge Canongate Kilwinning, 2, in later years and the minute recording his appointment to the office, which was an honorary one, speaks of it as one "which had been in abeyance since the death of the immortal Brother, Robert Burns."

Shortly after the publication of the second edition of his *Poems*, Burns set out with his friend and Brother Mason, Robert Ainslie, on a tour. Ainslie was afterwards Clerk to the Signet and became known in later years as the author of an *Essay on the Evidences of Christianity* and some devotional tracts. He died in April 1838. At Eyemouth they sojourned in the house of a "Brother of the Mystic Tie," by name William Grieve and the twain lighted upon a Knight Templar Encampment, held in connexion with Lodge St. Ebbe. Of this Encampment Burns was made an honorary member, as will be seen by the following copy of the minute :

“EYEMOUTH, May 19, 1787.

“At a general Encampment held this day, the following Brethren were made Royal Arch Masons, namely, Robert Burns, from the Lodge of St. James, Tarbolton, Ayrshire, and Robert Ainslie, from the Lodge of St. Luke, Edinburgh, by James Carmichael, William Grieve, Daniel Dow, John Clay, Robert Grieve, etc. etc. Robert Ainslie paid One Guinea admission dues, but on account of Robert Burns’s remarkable poetic genius the Encampment unanimously agreed to admit him gratis and considered themselves honoured by having a man of such shining abilities for one of their companions.”

Under this date Burns wrote in his *Diary*:

“Spent the day at Mr. Grieve’s—made a Royal Arch Mason of St. Abb’s Lodge. Mr. Wm. Grieve, the oldest brother, a joyous, warm-hearted, jolly clever fellow—takes a hearty glass and sings a good song. Mr. Robert, his brother and partner in trade, a good fellow, but says little—takes a sail after dinner—fishing of all kinds, pays tithes at Eyemouth.”

On 25th August 1787, Burns visited Holyrood and, in the evening of that day, was made an honorary member of Lodge Linlithgow Ancient

Brazen, 15, and three months later, on his return from his northern tour, he was made a burgess and freeman of the burgh.

Alfred A. Arbuthnot Murray, late Grand Scribe E. of the Supreme Grand Royal Arch Chapter of Scotland, speaking from his knowledge of the old working of the Scottish Royal Arch Chapters, thinks that, in all probability, Burns was made a Knight Templar as well as a Royal Arch Mason in Eyemouth, as, under the old regime, the two were always given together. The last of the old Arch and Temple bodies came under the Supreme Grand Royal Arch Chapter of Scotland only in 1911. Until that year there was one Lodge in Scotland wherein the Royal Arch and Templar degrees were worked without a charter.

On 27th December 1788, Burns was "unanimously assumed," being a "Master Mason," a member of Lodge St. Andrew, 179, Dumfries, afterwards known as Robert Burns Dumfries Lodge. The minute reads :

"Brother Robert Burns of Alliesland, of St. David's Strabolton Lodge, No. 178, being present, the Lodge unanimously assumed him a member of the Lodge, being a Master Masson,

and he subscribed the regulations as a Member. Thereafter the Lodge was shut.

“TIM MACKENZIE.”

It will be observed that the Secretary has inaccurately described the poet as of “St. David’s, Strabolton Lodge, No. 178,” instead of Lodge St. James, 178, Tarbolton.” Burns was afterwards frequently present at the meetings of this Lodge and was elected to fill the office of Senior Warden during 1793. His attendances at the Lodge, as recorded in the Attendance Book, were as follows: 1789, 27th December; 1791, 19th April and 27th December; 1792, 6th February, 14th and 31st May, 5th June, 23rd and 30th November (when he was elected Senior Warden); 1793, 30th November. Burns also attended the Lodge on 29th November 1794, to take part in the election of officers and, again, on 28th January 1796, in order to become sponsor for James Georgeson, merchant, of Liverpool, then a candidate for membership. Georgeson was successful in the ballot and was then initiated, along with Captain Adam Gordon, who was on terms of intimacy with Burns. He again attended, for the last time, on 14th April 1796, three months before his demise, which event,

strangely to relate, is not recorded in the minutes. The Lodge ceased to meet in 1805. An attempt was made in 1815 to revive it, but it ended in failure and in 1815 the Lodge was erased from the register. The Lodge Mallet, Apron, and the *Minute Book* in use in Lodge St. Andrew in Burns's time were purchased at a public sale in December 1879 by the then Grand Master Mason of Scotland, Sir Michael Shaw Stewart, Bart., who presented the relics to the Grand Lodge of Scotland.

On 13th June 1791, Lodge St. Mauchline was founded, as the outcome, it is claimed, of the two meetings held there under the Depute Mastership of Robert Burns. There is no record, however, that he was connected with the Lodge in any way and, shortly after the constitution of the Lodge, Burns removed to Dumfries. The Lodge was in existence for about eighty years, and its *Minute Book*, which was lost, was found in a shop in Edinburgh in 1867, by Dr. James Foulds, who gave an account of its contents in a paper which he read to the Masonic Veterans' Association of London, which was printed in *The Freemason* of 15th and 22nd March 1913, from which the facts narrated here are drawn. The Secretary was John Richmond, one of Burns's staunchest friends, to whom

reference is made elsewhere in this volume. It is singular that Richmond seems to have been the only one of his friends (or acquaintances) on whom Burns has not written a line of verse. The first Master of the Lodge was James Smith, to whom Burns addressed one of his longest and most famous epistles and the "Epitaph on a Wag in Mauchline." John Mackenzie, of whom mention is made in the chapter on "Burns and his Masonic Circle," was Depute Master. Matthew Morrison, the Treasurer, was uncle of "Bonnie Mary Morrison." John Dove, the Tyler, was the keeper of the Whitefoord Arms, the subject of the epitaph:

"Here lies Johnnie Pidgeon.
What was his religion?
Whae'er desires to ken,
To some ither warl
Must follow the carl,
For here Johnnie Pidgeon had nane."

Claude Alexander, who purchased the Whitefoord Estate, was a foundation member and was elected Second Master, but declined to serve and Gavin Hamilton was elected in his stead. He was brother to Miss Wilhelmina, "The Bonnie Lass o' Ballochmyle," who resented very strongly Burns's daring in making her the subject of one of his poetic epistles. James Armour, father of

“ Bonnie Jean,” whom the poet married, was also a foundation member. Campbell of Netherplace and the Rev. Dr. Dalrymple, senior minister of the parish of Ayr, became joining members of the Lodge. The former was the subject of the “Epitaph on a Henpeck’d Country Squire” :

“ As Father Adam first was fool’d
 (A case that’s far too common)
 Here lies a man a woman rul’d—
 The Devil rul’d the woman.”

He was also the subject of the epigram : “ The Henpeck’d Husband,” and of another, commencing “ One Queen Artemis.”

Dalrymple was also a member of Lodge Ayr Kilwinning and, along with the Rev. Dr. William M‘Gill, the author of *A Practical Essay on the Death of Christ*, was suspected of holding heterodox opinions on several points, particularly the doctrines of Original Sin and the Trinity. This essay was the cause of his arraignment before the Synod. The acrimonious and uncharitable spirit shown in the prosecution caused the poet to write in “ The Kirk’s Alarm” :

“ Dr. Mack, Dr. Mack, you should stretch on a rack,
 To strike evil-doers wi’ terror ;
 To join faith and sense upon ony pretence
 Is heretic, damnable error.”

Of Dalrymple, who was suspected of holding similar views, Burns wrote :

“ D’rymple mild, D’rymple mild, though your heart’s like a child,
And your life’s like the new-driven snaw,
Yet that winna save ye and Satan must have ye,
For preaching that three’s ane and twa.”

Another joining member of Lodge St. Mungo was James Humphrey, stone mason, politician, and windbag, the subject of one of Burns’s best-known epitaphs :

“ Below these stanes lie Jamie’s banes ;
O Death, it’s my opinion,
Ye ne’er took sic a bleth’rin’ bitch
Into your dark dominion.”

In the second year of the Lodge’s existence, William Fisher, a member of Lodge St. James, Tarbolton, also joined. He was the “ Holy Willie ” of the scathing satire, “ Holy Willie’s Prayer,” and of the “ Epitaph on Holy Willie.”

Gavin Hamilton held the office of Master for several years. The Lodge assisted in January 1820 at the laying of the foundation stone of the memorial “ raised to the memory of Bro. Burns, the Ayrshire Poet.”

THE INFLUENCE OF MASONRY UPON BURNS

WHEN Burns became a member of the Craft he was, in a great measure, unnoticed and unknown and, it must be admitted, somewhat unpolished in his manners. He had not enjoyed the advantages of the higher education which, though not difficult to secure in Scotland in those days, were beyond the possibility of his attainment. But, through his Masonic connexions, he came into frequent contact with Brethren higher than himself in the social scale, who recognized his talents and merits : thus his manners became more refined, his intellectual energies stimulated and his merits, gradually but surely, acknowledged and applauded outside the Masonic circle. This, undoubtedly, accounts in part, at least, for the fact that Freemasonry was, afterwards, much in his thoughts, helped to inspire his muse and nurture that strong love of independence and brotherhood which became the predominant characteristic of his manhood. It may even be

claimed that he became an enthusiastic Mason for, wherever he journeyed, he made it his immediate care to identify himself with the local Masonic Lodge and, with very few unimportant exceptions, all his patrons and acquaintances were members of the Order. It has been left to Principal Shairp to achieve what might almost have been regarded as an impossible task of writing a biography of Burns without once mentioning Freemasonry or the poet's connexion with the Craft. One writer, William Jelly, has, however, said of him :

“ Burns was a very keen Mason, the ideal philanthropy and brotherhood of the system being irresistible to such a mind and he used to go to Masonic meetings all the way to Tarbolton and Kilmarnock.”

In connexion with his love for the Craft, there has arisen an innuendo asserting that Masonry led him into all sorts of excesses, and Professor J. Stuart Blackie, in his *Life of Burns*, published in 1888, refers to this statement, circulated, in the first place, by an anonymous scribbler, in the following words :

“ In the latter part of the last century, in such a village as Tarbolton or Mauchline, it [Freemasonry] practically meant only a convivial

meeting of jolly good fellows, which might often be without it, but never could be without drink. Into the mystical brotherhood at Tarbolton the poet had flung himself with all the ardour of social enjoyment, which, next to love, supplied the most potent steam of his soul. But steam requires regulation ; and where there is no regulation, explosion is nigh. As an essentially social being, beating in every vein with an intense pulse of human kinship, Burns entered, heart and soul, into the best company he could find at the time and place ; and, if he did not always escape the contagion of unworthy companionship, he could, at all events, boast for himself that he strangled blue devils in the most brilliant style and, from his fellow-boosers, that he turned the commonplace level of their convivial compotations into an intellectual treat of the highest order."

Burns, as is well known, enjoyed a convivial gathering—in this he was not singular—and doubtless wrote with sympathy and gusto the words :

“ Then fill up a bumper and make it o’erflow,
And honours Masonic prepare for to throw,
May every true Brother of the compass and square
Have a big-belly’d bottle when harass’d with care.”

This was a stanza added to the song "No Churchman am I." But the most effective reply to the assertion of Professor Blackie, as well as to other statements of a similar character, is to quote from the poet's brother, Gilbert Burns, giving his testimony on this point. It is as follows :

" Towards the end of the period under review (in his twenty-fourth year) and soon after his father's death, he was furnished with the subject of his Epistle to John Rankin. During this period, also, he became a Freemason, which was his first introduction to the life of a boon companion. Yet, notwithstanding these circumstances and the praise he has bestowed on Scotch drink (which seems to have misled his historians), I do not recollect during those seven years, nor till the end of his commencing author (when his growing celebrity occasioned his often being in company) ever to have seen him intoxicated, nor was he at all given to drinking."

Mrs. Burns once told James Innes-Kerr Mackenzie, a contributor to *The Scots Magazine*, that Allan Cunningham was wrong in stating that Burns incurred his last illness by being inebriated and falling asleep in the open air. "In all her knowledge of him," she emphatically

stated, “either before marriage or after, she never once saw him intoxicated. Never once did she know him to be ‘seen hame’ or in the least difficulty as to disposal of himself when he arrived.”

It is evident from his own statements that the poet found in Masonic meetings the enjoyment he craved. Thus in his “Second Epistle to Davie” (David Sillar), he wrote :

“ Whyles daez’t wi’ love, whyles daez’t wi’ drink,
Wi’ jauds or masons.”

After Jean Armour’s father had refused his admission to his home, he wrote to David Brice, a shoemaker of Glasgow :

“ I have often tried to forget her. I have run into all kinds of dissipation and riots, mason meetings, drinking matches and other mischief, to drive her out of my head, but all in vain.”

We know, moreover, from many independent writers of that period how intensive and extensive were the convivial habits of the people in those days. Clubs and societies abounded and, to these, men of all professions belonged—judges, lawyers, statesmen, and preachers—many of whom were renowned as “two- or three-bottle men.” To be seen intoxicated in public was

not regarded as a disgrace, not even as a singularity ; abstainers would have been regarded as curiosities or, at least, with suspicion. The Wig Club of Edinburgh, notorious for its drinking bouts and lewd proceedings, claimed among its members some of the highest in the land. Freemasonry was practically the only institution of the time where men of all ranks, from the highest to the lowest, could “ meet upon the level and part upon the square ” and drinking was, in accordance with the spirit of the time, a necessary accompaniment of every gathering.

Irregular marriages also were common in all ranks, and the records of the Session are rather curious as illustrative of the rude state of society at the period in which Burns lived, even among the grades above the common peasantry. The following entry, which is of peculiar interest to all lovers of Burns, is illustrative of this statement :

“ Dec. 21, 1734.—John Hamilton, of Kype, clerk to the regality of Mauchline, confessed an irregular marriage with Jacobine Young, merchant in Lanark and had his son, Gavin, baptized.”

This was the Gavin Hamilton, who figures so prominently in the Burns’s annals.

Not long since, Sir James Crichton-Browne, in his book, *Burns from a New Point of View*, shattered entirely the fiction invented that the poet's end was hastened by his fondness for alcohol. It is, perhaps, fitting that the disproof should be summarized and furnished by another medical man, since the legend was given active circulation by Dr. Currie and, eloquently and effectually, Sir James Crichton-Browne has conducted the case for the defence and nought but a verdict of "Not Guilty" can be returned by the illimitable jury of readers. In those days, abstinence advocates, fewer in numbers than to-day, had not mastered that temperance in speech and expression of views which is more pronounced in the present age and Dr. Currie, who was one of the few of the rising band of total abstinence missionaries, was also one of the fanatics. It was also, perhaps, unfortunate that his own religious views were diametrically in opposition to those of the poet. Those personal views were incorporated in the *Biography* which he wrote—a work, let it be said, he was unwilling to undertake until all others had refused the task and which was only undertaken from the purest of philanthropic motives—to benefit the widow and children of the poet,

who had been left in straitened circumstances. Though Currie may have possessed the pen of a ready writer, he had not the skill and discretion of an experienced litterateur and, as Sir James Crichton-Browne points out, he did not even exercise the care correctly to transcribe passages communicated by others or to suppress his own views and erroneous deductions. In a scientific manner, Sir James Crichton-Browne not only dissects the evidence *pro* and *con*, but demonstrates the cause of the poet's early and untimely disease, which was what is commonly known as heart disease, of rheumatic origin, which, no doubt, dated from childhood; corroboration for which opinion is found in the writings of the poet's brother as well as in the poet's own letters to various people, the letters of Professor Dugald Stewart, and of others. The justification is so clear and complete that the reader can but wonder it was not attempted before, though, at the same time, he will also express his gratitude to the author for undertaking a task in which he has acquitted himself in so able a manner. While Burns has been vilified for faults he never committed, he has now secured an honourable and complete acquittal.

BURNS AND HIS MASONIC CIRCLE

THE delight of Charles Lamb was to gather round him on Wednesday evenings a circle of his friends and the records of those meetings are found scattered in the writings of the many who were privileged to attend them, either regularly or occasionally.

Robert Burns, too, loved the company of his fellow-men and the record of his intercourse with them is to be found in his poems. They were all members of the Craft, for the place of meeting was invariably, or principally, the Lodge room. The majority of the members who formed that circle have become famous in various walks of life. The Craft gave Burns his first introduction to the Society of Manhood, and Masonry exerted on him an influence which never lost its hold on him. Let us take a few of the members of the Circle at random.

DUGALD STEWART

One of the most famous members, perhaps, was Professor Dugald Stewart. He was the

son of the Rev. Dr. Mathew Stewart, an eminent geometrician and Professor of Mathematics in the University of Edinburgh. The son was born in Old College Buildings, Edinburgh, on 22nd November 1753 and, at the age of eight years, entered upon his classical studies in the High School of Edinburgh and, at the age of thirteen, commenced his studies at the University of Edinburgh ; after finishing his course there, he proceeded, in 1771, to the University of Glasgow. At the age of nineteen, he became substitute for his father in the Chair of Mathematics at Edinburgh ; three years later, in 1775, he was elected his assistant and, ten years afterwards, he succeeded Ferguson as Professor of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh. Among his pupils were Lord Brougham, Lord Palmerston, Earl Russell, Lord Lansdowne, Francis Horner, Lord Jeffrey, Sir Walter Scott, Sydney Smith, Thomas Brown, Thomas Chalmers, James Mill and Sir A. Alison. In 1822 he had a stroke of paralysis, from which he partially recovered and he passed away on 11th June 1828, his remains being interred in the Canongate Churchyard, Edinburgh. It was during the latter part of 1786 that Dr. John Mackenzie of Mauchline embraced a suitable opportunity of making

Burns known personally to Dugald Stewart, who was then residing in his villa at Catrine, about two miles distant from Mauchline. The professor invited the physician and the poet to dine with him and his family on 23rd October of that year, when Lord Daer formed one of the company. Burns's opinion of Dugald Stewart was given afterwards in a letter which he wrote to Dr. Mackenzie, in which he said :

“ I never spent an afternoon with half that pleasure as when, in company with you, I had the honour of paying my devoirs to that plain, honest, worthy man, the Professor. I think his character, divided into ten parts, stands thus : four parts, Socrates ; four parts, Nathanael ; two parts, Shakespeare's Brutus.”

There are several evidences that the Professor formed a very favourable opinion of Burns, not the least being that he, already a member of Lodge Canongate Kilwinning, 2, on 25th July 1787 accepted honorary membership of Lodge St. James, Tarbolton, of which, at that time, Burns was Depute Master and the minute recording such admission is signed “ Robert Burns, D.M.” Stewart, writing afterwards to a friend, said :

“ In summer 1787, I passed some weeks in

Ayrshire and saw Burns occasionally. I think he told me that he had an excursion that season to the West Highlands and that he also visited what Beattie calls the Arcadian Ground of Scotland, upon the banks of the Teviot and the Tweed. In the course of the same season, I was led by curiosity to attend for an hour or two a Mason Lodge at Mauchline, where Burns presided. He had occasion to make some short, unpremeditated compliments to different individuals, from whom he had no reason to expect a visit and everything he said was happily conceived and forcibly, as well as fluently, expressed. His manner of speaking in public had evidently the marks of some practice in extempore education."

Burns has written of the two professors—father and son :

" With deep-struck, reverential awe,
The learned sire and son I saw,
To nature's God and nature's law
They gave their love."

HENRY MACKENZIE

One of the earliest acquaintances, ripening into intimate friendship, made by Burns on his arrival in Edinburgh, was that of Henry MacKenzie, author of the *Man of Feeling*. This book

had been read and re-read by Burns: he was wont to say that he had worn out two copies by carrying them in his pocket. He described it as "a book I prize next to the Bible." Mackenzie, who was one of the leading lights of Edinburgh for half a century (Sir Walter Scott dedicated *Waverley* to him, styling him the Scottish Addison), shared with Sterne the honour of being denominated by Burns a "bosom favourite." Mackenzie, who was a member of Lodge Canongate Kilwinning, 2, announced in *The Lounger*, upon Burns's arrival in Edinburgh, that a new poet had been born to Scotland. He had, however, been forestalled, five weeks previously, by James Sibbald, who published in the *Edinburgh Magazine* a flattering criticism of Burns's works, which some writers maintain had some influence on the poet's decision to go to the capital city. To *The Lounger* for 9th December 1786, Mackenzie contributed a review of Burns's *Poems*, in which he described him as a "genius of no ordinary rank" and "a heaven-taught plowman."

Cockburn, in *Memorials of his Time*, says that Henry Mackenzie's "excellent conversation, agreeable family and the good evening parties, as well as the interest attached to united age and

reputation, made his house one of the pleasantest. The title of the 'Man of Feeling' adhered to him ever after the publication of that novel, and it was a good example of the difference there sometimes is between a man and his work. Strangers used to fancy that he must be a pensive, sentimental Harley, whereas he was far better, a hard-headed, practical man, as full of worldly wisdom as most of his fictitious characters are devoid of it and this, without in the least impairing the affectionate softness of his heart. In person, he was thin, shrivelled and yellow, kiln-dried, with something, when seen in profile, of the clever, wicked look of Voltaire."

It must have gratified Mackenzie, who was one of the first to extend kindness to the poet on his arrival in Edinburgh, afterwards to be rewarded so frequently by witnessing the glory of the genius which he had discerned and cherished so early.

FRANCIS GROSE

There is one who looms largely, in more than one meaning of that word, in the Burns records—Francis Grose, the renowned antiquarian :

"A fine fat widgeon wight
Of stature short, but genius bright."

Grose was exceedingly corpulent, as the caricaturists of his day have not forgotten to remind us and he used to rally himself with the greatest good humour on the singular rotundity of his figure. Burns wrote the following epigram upon him, which was so much relished by Grose that he made it serve as an excuse for prolonging the convivial occasion that gave it birth to a very late hour :

“ The Devil got notice that Grose was a-dying,
 So whip ! at the summons, old Satan came flying :
 But when he approach'd where poor Francis lay moaning
 And saw each bed-post with its burden a-groaning,
 Astonish'd ! confounded ! cry'd Satan, ‘ By God,
 I'll want 'im, ere I take such a damnable load.’ ”

It was of Grose Burns wrote the well-known poem commencing :

“ Hear, Land o' Cakes and brither Scots,
 Frae Maidenkirk to John o' Groats,
 If there's a hole in a' your coats,
 I rede you tent it ;
 A chiel's amang ye, taking notes,
 And, faith, he'll prent it.”

Burns requested Captain Grose, when he should come to Ayrshire, that he should make a drawing of Alloway Kirk, as it was the burial-place of his father, where he himself had a sort of claim to lay

down his bones when they should be no longer serviceable to him. Grose agreed, providing Burns would furnish a witch story to be printed along with it. "Tam o' Shanter" was the result, although the poem had been sketched previously in Kirkoswald.

In his *Antiquities of Scotland*, Grose acknowledges his obligations to the poet in the following terms :

"To my ingenious friend, Mr. Robert Burns, I have been variously obligated : he was not only at the pains of making out what was most worthy of notice in Ayrshire, the county honoured by his birth, but he also wrote, expressly for this work, the pretty tale annexed to Alloway Church."

That "pretty tale" is Burns's inimitable "Tam o' Shanter."

Grose was born in 1731, the son of Francis Grose, of Richmond, jeweller, who fitted up the coronation crown of George II. He was left an independent fortune by his father and, in early life, entered the Surrey Militia, of which he became adjutant and paymaster, but was careless and kept no vouchers, whether for receipts or payments. The result was that his fortune suffered speedily for his folly. He received a

good classical education and he had a fine taste for drawing. Upon his financial failure, he started on his famous work, *The Antiquities of England and Wales*, which extended to eight volumes. The success which attended it induced him to undertake *The Antiquities of Scotland*. Afterwards he undertook *The Antiquities of Ireland* and, while engaged on that work, when he was in Dublin, he was seized with a stroke of apoplexy and he passed away in his fifty-second year on 12th May 1791, not long after his initiation into Freemasonry. Grose was not introduced to Burns until 1789, but they were kindred spirits and, to use the poet's own phrase, they at once became "pack and thick thegither."

JOHN BALLANTINE

Then we have John Ballantine, brother of James Ballantine, whom he assisted in the production of the *Kelso Mail*. Afterwards he set up in business at Edinburgh as a bookseller and publisher and became the friend and confidant of Sir Walter Scott in the production of the *Waverley Novels*. He was himself the author of a novel entitled *The Widow's Lodgings*. Scott gave him the nickname of "Rigidumfundidos."

An important Masonic and social friendship was formed between Burns and John Ballantine of Castlehill, Provost of Ayr, to whom Burns inscribed "The Brigs of Ayr." Ballantine was an initiate of Lodge Edinburgh St. David, 36, afterwards becoming Master of Lodge Ayr Kilwinning, known originally as Squaremen's (Kilwinning) Lodge, 65, Ayr, erected in 1765 by Lodge Mother Kilwinning. Macadam, the celebrated road-maker, was at one time Master of this Lodge and Lord Alloway was its representative in Grand Lodge, prior to his elevation to the Bench. It was to the exertions of John Ballantine that Ayr was indebted for the new Brig, which was opened on 22nd November 1796, with a grand Masonic demonstration, the Grand Lodge of Scotland being represented on that occasion by William Campbell of Fairfield, who became a joining member of Lodge Canon-gate Kilwinning in December 1786, on the occasion of Burns's visit. In 1801, Ballantine instituted the Allowa' Club, with the view of celebrating regularly the anniversary of the poet's birth and it was he who asked the Rev. Hamilton Paul to furnish the Lodge with an annual ode in honour of the poet, which he did for nineteen consecutive years.

GAVIN TURNBULL

Gavin Turnbull was a native of Hawick, in Roxburghshire, but, at a very early period in his life, his parents settled in Kilmarnock, where he received his education. He was bred to the trade of carpet-weaving. His father, Thomas Turnbull, or Tammy Trumble, as he was known, was a dyer and a somewhat eccentric character, who bestowed upon his son the rudiments of a classical education. His prospects seemed to have been marred through some family misfortune. According to M'Kay, in *The Contemporaries of Burns* :

“ He resided alone in a small garret in Soulis Street. The bed on which he lay was entirely composed of straw, having only an old patched coverlet, which he drew over himself during the night. He had no chair or stool. A cold stone placed by the fire served as a substitute and the sill of a small window at one end of the room was all he had for a table, from which to take his food or on which to write his verse. In short, an old tin kettle (his only cooking utensil) and one spoon comprised the whole of his moveable property and the lid of the former, on every occasion, made up for the want of a bowl or plate.”

In versification and sentiment, Turnbull was a follower of Burns. His own description of his abode in his "Ode to David Sillar" was as follows :

" By this ye'll figure to yoursel',
 Dear lad, the method how I dwell
 And pass the lonely time ;
 In a wee house, warm and snug,
 I sit beside the chimla lug
 And spin awa' my rhyme."

One of his longer poems was entitled "The Bard," and was inscribed "To Mr. R——B——," and begins :

" O thou, whom from the pleasant banks of Ayr,
 Thy merit summon'd the Edina's walls ;
 Whose songs delight her sons and daughters fair
 And loudly echo through their splendid halls.
 On thee a simple poet humbly calls—
 A simple poet, who, observed the while,
 The fear of scornful critic sore appals ;
 On whom, if Coila's bard vouchsafe to smile,
 His name shall spread abroad thro' Albion's sea-girt
 isle."

Turnbull's works were printed in Glasgow in 1788, whither he and the rest of his father's family had removed, under the title of *Poetical Essays* and were favourably noticed by Campbell in his *History of Poetry in Scotland*. According to

Crichton, he became unsettled in his mode of life, entered on the stage and married one of the actresses whom he there met. When in Dumfries he was sometimes in the company of Burns, who thought not meanly of his poetical talents and, in 1793, Burns wrote to Thomson, of Edinburgh, for whom he was then furnishing songs :

“ The following is by an old acquaintance of mine and, I think, has merit. The song was never in print, which is so much in your favour. The more original good poetry your collection contains, it certainly has much the more credit. Possibly as he is an old friend of mine, I may be prejudiced in his favour, but I like some of his pieces very much.”

In reply, Thomson wrote :

“ Your friend Turnbull’s songs have doubtless considerable merit and, as you have the command of his manuscripts, I hope you will find some that will answer.”

In 1794, Turnbull published a second work, a collection of his poems. He was also a friend of Alexander Wilson, the author of *American Ornithology*, *Watty and Meg*, with other works and, like him, migrated to America. There is no record of his fate in that land.

SIR JOHN WHITEFOORD

Burns became on intimate terms with Sir John Whitefoord, *Bart.*, of Ballochmyle, who became Master of Lodge St. James after its separation from Lodge St. David. He was initiated in Lodge Canongate Kilwinning, 2, in 1765, when that Lodge was under the rule of Lord Provost George Drummond. In the following year he was appointed Senior Grand Warden of Scotland, which office he held for two years. The Whitefoords acquired Ballochmyle from the Reids, about the middle of the eighteenth century. The Reids were, at one time, a numerous clan in Kyle, but they kept the estate for a few years only. Sir John succeeded to the baronetcy on 2nd March 1763 and, on the 13th February 1767, succeeded to the estate of Ballochtree, on the death of his uncle, Allan Whitefoord; but he had to dispose of all his property in 1768, in consequence of his great losses in connexion with the failure of the Douglas and Heron Bank. He is said to have been the original of Sir Arthur Wardour in *The Antiquary*. After leaving Ballochmyle, he resided at Whitefoord House in the Canongate of Edinburgh. He was a smart, active little

man and having been some time in the Army, he retained much of the military air in his appearance. His manners are said to have been affable and those of a gentleman. At a date, believed to have been towards the end of 1782, before Burns became known as a poet, the following letter in his own handwriting was addressed by Burns to Sir John Whitefoord :

“ SIR,—We, who subscribe to this, are members of St. James’s Lodge, Tarbolton and one of us is in the office of Warden and, as we have the honour of having you for Master of our Lodge, we hope you will excuse this freedom, as you are the proper person to whom we ought to apply. We look on our Mason Lodge to be a serious matter, both with respect to the character of Masonry itself and, likewise, as it is a Charitable Society. This last, indeed, does not interest you farther than a benevolent heart is interested in the welfare of its fellow-creatures ; but to us, Sir, who are of the lower orders of mankind, to have a fund in view, on which we may, with certainty, depend to be kept from want, should we be in circumstances of distress or old age, that is a matter of high importance.

“ We are sorry to observe that our Lodge’s

affairs, with respect to its finances, have, for a good while, been in a wretched situation. We have considerable sums in bills, which lye by without being paid or put in execution and many of our members never mind their yearly dues, or anything else belonging to our Lodge. And, since the separation from St. David's, we are not sure even of our existence as a Lodge. There has been a dispute before the Grand Lodge, but how decided, or if decided at all, we know not.

“ For these and other reasons, we humbly beg the favour of you, as soon as convenient, to call a meeting and let us consider on some means to retrieve our wretched affairs.”

Afterwards, Burns and Sir John Whitefoord became on intimate terms and the eldest daughter of the latter, Mary Anne—Mrs. Cranston—was Burns's heroine in “ The Braes of Ballochmyle” :

“ Through faded groves Maria sang,
Hersel’ in beauty’s bloom the while ;
An’ aye the wild-wood echoes rang—
Farewell the Braes of Ballochmyle.”

Sir John Whitefoord passed away on 10th April 1803, at Whitefoord House in the Canongate.

LORD MONBODDO

James Burnett, Lord Monboddo, a Scotch judge, the eldest surviving son of James Burnett, of Monboddo, Kincardineshire, by Elizabeth, his wife, the only daughter of Sir William Forbes, *Bart.*, was present at Lodge St. Andrews, 48, when Grand Master Charteris gave the toast of "Caledonia and Caledonia's Bard, Robert Burns." This, however, was not the first occasion on which the poet and the judge had met. Monboddo had for his second daughter one who was singularly beautiful, who devoted herself exclusively to her father. She was described as "the very light of his eyes and the joy of his heart in his old age." She had a fine literary sense and was admired by every one. On the occasion of the poet's first visit to Edinburgh, when he journeyed thither to look after the publication of his poems, he saw much of Lord Monboddo and his daughter. He was then introduced into the judge's household by the Hon. Henry Erskine, a member of the Craft. At the supper parties held in St. John Street, the best social qualities of the Bard came out. When Burns returned to Ayrshire, after this first visit, his friend, Geddes, said to him: "Well,

and did you admire the young lady ? ” Burns replied : “ I admire God Almighty more than ever. Miss Burnett is the most heavenly of all His works.” In his “ Address to Edinburgh,” Burns wrote :

“ Thy daughters bright thy walks adorn
 Gay as the gilded summer sky,
Sweet as the dewy milk-white thorn,
 Dear as the raptured thrill of joy ;
Fair Burnett strikes th’ adoring eye,
 Heaven’s beauties on my fancy shine ;
I see the Sire of Love on high
 And own His work indeed divine ! ”

Writing to William Chalmers at Ayr on 27th December 1786, Burns said :

“ Fair B—— is the heavenly Miss Burnett, daughter to Lord Monboddo, at whose house I have had the honour to be more than once. There has not been anything like her in all the combinations of beauty, grace, and goodness the Great Creator has formed since Milton’s Eve, on the first day of her existence.”

Four days later, Burns wrote to Lord Monboddo :

“ I shall do myself the honour, Sir, to dine with you to-morrow, as you obligingly request. My conscience twitting me with evident neglect

to send Miss Elsie a song, which she once mentioned to me as a song she wished to have, I enclose it for her with one or two more by way of peace-offering."

On Miss Burnett's death in 1790, at the age of twenty-five years, Burns wrote to Cunningham :

" I have these several months been hammering at an elegy on the amiable and accomplished Miss Burnett. I have got and can get no further than the following fragments."

The elegy consists of seven stanzas, three of which are as follows :

" Life ne'er exulted in so rich a prize
As Burnett, lovely from her native skies ;
Nor envious death so triumph'd in a blow,
As that which laid the accomplish'd Burnett low.

Thy form and mind, sweet maid, can I forget ?
In richest ore the brightest jewel set !
In thee, high Heaven above was truest shown,
As by His noblest work the Godhead best is known.

In vain ye flaunt in summer's pride, ye groves ;
Thou crystal streamlet with thy flowery shore,
Ye woodland choir that chaunt your idle loves,
Ye cease to charm—Eliza is no more ! "

Monboddo was also the friend of James Thomson, the poet ; also of Dr. John Armstrong, his bosom friend, both members of the Masonic

Craft. Not that he limited his friendship to Masons. He was an original and very prominent member of the Select Society, founded at Edinburgh, in 1754, by the painter, Allan Ramsay, only son of the poet of the same name. This Society met weekly on Friday evenings in the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh, for literary and philosophical discussion and for the improvement of its members in the art of public speaking. The membership included such men as Sir Gilbert Elliot ; Alexander Wedderburn, afterwards Lord Loughborough ; Andrew Pringle, afterwards Alemoor ; Dr. Hugh Blair ; Professor William Wilkie, author of *The Epigonaïd* ; Lord Kaimes ; Lord Hailes ; Lord Elibank ; Sir John Dalrymple ; Dr. Robertson, the historian, and afterwards Principal of the University of Edinburgh ; David Hume ; Adam Smith ; and Fergusson, the poet. Dr. Carlyle, of Inveresk, speaks of Lord Monboddo and Lord Elibank as the members " who had the peculiar talent of supporting their tenets by an inexhaustible fund of humour and argument." In 1759 there were 130 members enrolled. Its popularity is shown by a letter written to Allan Ramsay by David Hume, in which he says :

" The Select Society has grown to be an inter-

national concern. Young and old, noble and ignoble, witty and dull, laity and clergy of the world are impatient of a place amongst them ; on each occasion we are as much solicited by candidates as if we were to choose a member of Parliament.”

Would that in those days shorthand writing had been more general and that there was in existence an authentic record of the debates conducted in the meetings of the Select Society. David Hume relates how Wedderburn having, to his own satisfaction and that of a large number of the members, turned a theory of Monboddo into ridicule, the latter at once rose and replied :

“ Mr. Preses, the Ancients roasted above the fire ; the Moderns roast before the fire ; but, methinks, this young gentleman would fain roast without any fire ! ”

GAVIN HAMILTON

Burns made the acquaintance of Gavin Hamilton—

“ The poor man’s friend in need,
The gentleman in word and deed ”—

in Lodge St. James, when the latter suggested that the poet should collect and publish an

edition of his poems, advice which was also tendered by Aiken, Goldie, and Ballantine. Burns acted on the advice, as is well known, and the edition, published in 1780, was dedicated to Gavin Hamilton.

Hamilton was initiated in Lodge St. James on 28th December 1776, the event being recorded in the minutes as follows :

"Mr. Gavin Hamilton, from Machlen, was admitted as brother; and joyans as a member in this Lodge, and gave five shillings to the box in compliment. Wm. ARNOT, Master."

Wm. Arnot, Master."

In 1778, he was appointed Senior Warden of the Lodge and he served as Master in 1780, 1781, and 1786. At that time the Lodge met at the Loudoun Arms Hotel, kept by a Mrs. Mason, and among its members were John Arnot, of Dalquhatswood (Master in 1785) and Hugh Morton, of Darvel Mill, both of whom subscribed for the Edinburgh edition of Burns's *Poems*.

Gavin Hamilton also became a member of the St. Mungo Lodge, 240, Mauchline, in which his three sons were initiated: John, the eldest, on 25th October 1797; he died in August 1863, at the age of eighty-four; he had been a factor in

the service of the Marquess of Hastings and of the Duke of Portland. Alexander, the second son, was initiated on 4th December 1805 ; he became Master in 1808. Dr. Dugald Stewart Hamilton, the third and youngest, was initiated on 11th June 1808, and became Master in the following year ; he also joined Lodge St. James, Tarbolton, in the management of which he took an active interest, resigning from the Mastership, which he held for several years, in the late 'fifties of the nineteenth century. He passed away at Mauchline in June 1863.

Gavin Hamilton died on 5th February 1805, at the age of fifty-four. No tombstone marks his grave in the Auld Kirkyard, the reason for the omission being, according to local tradition, at his own request. A marble tablet, bearing a suitable inscription, was, however, erected by the Partick Burns Club on 12th April 1919. Burns wrote an epitaph :

“ The poor man weeps, here Gavin sleeps,
Whom canting wretches blam’d ;
Wi’ such as he, where’er he be,
May I be sav’d or damn’d.”

Hamilton was known affectionately by his countrymen as “ the puir man’s friend.” “ How did he get that name ? ” asked William Jolly of

Willy Patrick, a Mossiel herd, who, in his younger days, had worked for both the poet and Gavin Hamilton, when visiting Mauchline in 1859. "He was aye kind to the puir man and aye took his pairt," was the ready reply. Of him, Burns also wrote :

" But if (which powers above prevent)
That iron-headed carl, Want,
Attended in her grim advances
By sad mistakes and black mischances,
While hopes and joys and pleasures fly him,
Make you as poor a dog as I am,
Your humble servant then no more ;
For who would humbly serve the poor,
But by a poor man's hopes in heaven !

While recollection's power is given,
If in the veil of humble life,
The victim sad of fortune's strife,
I thro' the tender gushing tear,
Should recognize my master dear,
If friendless know, we meet together,
Then, Sir, your hand, my Friend and Brother ! "

TAM SAMSON

Burns made the acquaintance of Thomas Samson, the Kilmarnock nurseryman and seedsman, through his attendance at Lodge St. John, 22, Kilmarnock. He became a constant visitor

at Tam Samson's residence at Rosebank, Braehead, where he was welcomed with the utmost cordiality and where he frequently dined in company with a few chosen friends, who were drawn to the poet by his fascinating conversation. Of his host, Burns wrote in "Tam Samson's Elegy" :

"The Brethren o' the mystic 'level'
May hing their head in wofu' bevel,
While by their nose the tears will revel
Like ony bead ;
Death's gien the Lodge an unco' devel,
Tam Samson's dead ! "

This elegy was composed in 1786, but Samson did not die until nine years afterwards. When Tam heard that Burns had written his epitaph, he sent for the poet and made him repeat it to him. When it was finished, Tam exclaimed : "I'm no' dead yet, I'm worth ten dead fowk ; wherefore should ye say that I am dead ?" Burns withdrew to a window and, in a minute or two, returned with the following lines :

"Go, Fame, and canter like a filly,
Through a' the streets and neuks o' Killie,
Tell every social, honest billie,
To cease his grievin',
For yet unskaithed by Death's gleg gullie,
Tam Samson's leevin'."

with which Tam was so delighted that he rose unconsciously, rubbed his hands, and exclaimed : “ That’ll do—ha ! ha !—that’ll do.”

James Paterson, in his *History of the County of Ayr*, relates the following account of the circumstances under which the elegy and its sequel were written :

“ On the occasion referred to, Mr. Samson was longer than usual in returning from his fields. Burns was then in Kilmarnock and, being in company with Charles Samson, nephew of the sportsman, the conversation turned upon the shooting season. ‘ By the bye, Burns,’ said Charles, ‘ have you heard anything of my uncle to-day ? ’ ‘ Not a syllable,’ replied the Bard ; ‘ but why that question ? ’ ‘ He has been longer than is his wont in returning from his sports,’ answered Charles, ‘ and his wish about dying amang the muirs has, perhaps, been realized.’ I recollect the words of the game old cock, but I trust it will turn out otherwise.’ The poet, however, became a little thoughtful and, taking a piece of paper from his pocket, wrote the first draft of the Elegy and Epitaph. In the course of the evening, Mr. Samson returned, safe and sound. A meeting of his friends took place and Burns, of course, was one of the party. He

amused them by reading the Elegy. ‘Na, na, Robin,’ cried the subject of the poem, ‘I’m no’ fond of that mournfu’ story ; I wad rather ye wad tell the world that I’m hale and hearty.’ Burns, to gratify his friend, retired for a short time to another apartment and wrote the *per contra*, with which he immediately returned and read it to the company. The rehearsal of the verse, we need scarcely say, restored the old sportsman to his wonted good humour.”

Tam was elected Treasurer of his Lodge on 22nd December 1779. He really passed away in December 1795, at the age of seventy-two and his remains were interred in Kilmarnock Laigh Churchyard, a plain slab marking the spot where his ashes repose, on which appears the following epitaph, written also by Burns :

“ Tam Samson’s weel-worn clay here lies,
Ye canting zealots spare him !
If honest worth in heaven rise,
Ye’ll mend or ye win near him.”

The remains of Dr. Mackinlay and John Robertson, who are mentioned in the first verse of the “Elegy,” are interred so near to those of Samson that they all occupy one spot in the churchyard as they do one stanza in the poem.

The interior of Tam Samson’s house has been

preserved almost intact by his descendants—Samson & Company, Nurserymen. Alexander Patrick, son-in-law of Tam Samson, was the landlord of Sandy Patrick's Tavern, a “howf” of Burns, which was situated in a by-lane at the head of the Forgate, Kilmarnock, its full description being “Bowling Green House, in Back Street, Kilmarnock.” Here Burns spent many merry meetings with Samson and other social cronies after a day's shooting. Sandy's house, which consisted of two storeys, was famed for its superior drink, the “cap ale,” which the proprietor himself brewed. The house was demolished when East George Street was formed.

DR. JOHN MACKENZIE

It was in Lodge St. James that Burns made the more intimate acquaintance of Dr. John Mackenzie, who married one of the celebrated Mauchline Belles :

“ In Mauchline there dwells six proper young belles,
The pride of the place and its neighbourhood a’;
Their carriage and dress, a stranger would guess,
In London or Paris, they’d gotten it a’.
Miss Miller is fine, Miss Markland’s divine,
Miss Smith she has wit and Miss Betty is braw;
There’s beauty and fortune to get wi’ Miss Morton,
But Armour’s the jewel for me o’ them a’.”

It was Miss Miller who became the wife of Dr. Mackenzie. Miss Markland married Mr. Findlay, an excise officer at Tarbolton, who instructed the poet in the art of gauging. Miss Smith married Mr. Candlish, a teacher at Edinburgh University and became the mother of Dr. Candlish, the eminent Free Church divine. Miss Betty Miller married Mr. Templeton, of Mauchline ; while Miss Morton married Mr. Patterson, a cloth merchant, also of Mauchline. Miss Armour, of course, became the wife of the poet.

It was not in Lodge, however, that Burns and the doctor first met. The doctor had attended the poet's father in a professional capacity in the early spring of 1783. He afterwards gave his impression of the poet on that occasion in a letter to Professor Walker, written in 1810, in which he said :

“ The poet seemed distant, suspicious and without any wish to interest or please. He kept himself very silent in a dark corner of the room ; and, before he took any part in the conversation, I frequently detected him scrutinizing me during my conversation with his father and brother. But, afterwards, when the conversation, which was on a medical subject, had taken the turn he

wished, he began to engage in it, displaying a dexterity of reasoning, an ingenuity of reflexion and a familiarity with topics apparently beyond his reach, by which his visitor was no less gratified than astonished.

“ From the period of which I speak I took a lively interest in Robert Burns and, before I was acquainted with his poetical powers, I perceived that he possessed very great mental abilities, an uncommonly fertile and lively imagination, a thorough acquaintance with many of our Scottish poets and an enthusiastic admiration of Ramsay and Fergusson. Even within the subjects with which he was acquainted, his conversation was rich in well-chosen figures, animated and energetic. Indeed, I have always thought that no person could have a just idea of the extent of Burns’s talents who had not had an opportunity of hearing him converse. His discrimination of character was great beyond that of any person I ever knew and I have often observed to him that it seemed to be intuitive. I seldom ever knew him to make a false estimate of character, when he formed an opinion from his own observation and not from the representation of persons to whom he was partial.”

Dr. John Mackenzie was a man of excellent

character, broad sympathies and good social position. He was one of those friends possessing literary taste to whom Burns submitted his poems and whose discerning appreciation of their genius was of the highest encouragement to the poet, as well as of eminent service in developing his muse and making it known to the world. He, himself, had written pamphlets on some of the religious controversies of the time, under the pseudonym of "Common Sense," and one on the *Origin of Morals*—hence the reference in the lines, presently to be quoted, to "Johnnie's Morals."

The annual meeting of Lodge St. James was always held on St. John the Baptist's Day, 24th June and, on one occasion (dated from Mossiel, A.M. 5790), Burns addressed a note to Dr. Mackenzie, who had expressed a fear that his professional duties might prevent his attendance at that festival, which occurred about the same time, in the following words :

" Friday first's the day appointed
By the Right Worshipful Anointed,
To hold our grand procession,
To get a blaud of Johnnie's Morals,
An' taste a swatch of Manson's Barrels,
I' th' way of our profession :

Our Master and the Brotherhood
Wad a' be glad to see you ;
For me, I wad be mair than proud
To share the mercies wi' you.

If Death, then,
Wi' skaith then,
Some mortal heart is hechtin' ;
Inform him
An' storm him,
That Saturday ye'll fecht him."

This anniversary was always borne in mind by Burns and, on one occasion, when in a despondent mood, he wrote :

" Tarbolton, twenty-fourth o' June,
You'll find me in a better tune."

JOHN CLERK : LORD ELDIN

The name of John Clerk appears frequently in the records as one whose acquaintance Burns made on that famous visit to Edinburgh. His popularity was such that, even after his accession to the Bench and he was created Lord Eldin, he was seldom known by any other name than John Clerk. That name figures prominently in the annals of Edinburgh social life and legal society and, not less frequently, in the records of Scottish wit and humour, which are abundant and not

scarce, as some would have us believe. He was the eldest son of John Clerk, of Eldin, near Lasswade, author of a well-known treatise on Naval Tactics. Born in 1757, he was educated with the view of taking up an appointment in the Indian Civil Service, but afterwards studied for the law. He qualified, first, as a Writer to the Signet, then practised as an accountant, but finally qualified for the Bar and was admitted to the Faculty of Advocates in 1785. He speedily rose to distinction and, it is said, that, at one period, nearly half the business of the courts was in his hands. In 1806, he was appointed Solicitor-General, but only held the appointment for one year. He was elevated to the Bench in 1823, succeeding Lord Bannatyne as Lord of Session, when he assumed the title of Lord Eldin, taking the name from his paternal estate. It was not unnatural, perhaps, that confusion should sometimes occur, because the Lord Chancellor's name was Eldon; but he met this by saying that "the difference is all in my 'i'." In 1807, he was elected Senior Grand Warden of Scotland, to which position he was afterwards re-elected three times.

Prior to his appointment to Grand Rank,

he appeared as procurator for the panels or defendants in a Masonic trial held at Ayr. Certain members of Lodge St. David, Tarbolton (Burns's Mother Lodge), were charged with sedition and the administration of unlawful oaths :

“ Insofar as they did, under the show of pretence of a meeting for Masonry, along with others, their associates, most of them from Ireland, form themselves into an illegal club or association styling itself ‘ The Grand Assembly of Knights Templar,’ or bearing some such name ; which club or association, under the pretence of initiating into ceremonies of Masonry, did admit various persons as members and did, at said admission, perform various ceremonies with the view to villify and undermine the established religion and, partly, to represent the constitution and government of the country as oppressive and tyrannical ; and did, with this view, pledge those who were admitted members, to take and did administer to them an oath binding them ‘ to conceal the secrets of the Order of Knights Templar, murder and treason not excepted,’ or an oath of some such import and tendency.”

It was, of course, proved at the trial that the

oath, such as it was, included the words “Murder and treason excepted,” and the judge held that there was no proof that the panels had entered into a design of leading the persons ever admitted into their society to seditious practices, that no such ceremonies as alleged in the evidence were employed in Masonic Lodges. In the end the panels were dismissed on the unanimous verdict of the jury.

Clerk was also one of the counsel for the complainers in an action in 1808 for interdict, etc., raised against Lodges seeking to secede from the Grand Lodge of Scotland.

John Clerk was very popular in social life, particularly for his wit and epigrammatic utterances and many of his sayings are repeated in Edinburgh Society to the present day. He suffered from lameness and, on one occasion, when passing certain persons in the street, he overheard one of them remark: “There is John Clerk, the lame lawyer” and, turning sharply round, he said good-humouredly, “I am lame John Clerk, not a lame lawyer.” Cockburn, in his *Memorials of his Time*, says that this lameness was due to a contracted limb, which made him pitch when he walked and only admitted of his standing erect by hanging it in the air.

This defect added to the peculiarity of a figure with which other oddities were connected. He had blue eyes, very bushy eyebrows, coarse, grisly hair always in disorder and firm projecting features, which made his face and head not unlike that of a thoroughbred, shaggy terrier. He had a countenance of great thought and decision. Clerk was noted for his pugnacity. On one occasion, when he was in practice as an advocate, one of the justices of the Court of Session, whose father had been a distinguished member under the same title, petulantly interrupted Clerk with the remark that they could not listen all day to the reiteration of "also" and "likewise." Clerk promptly replied that the judge seemed to think the two words synonymous, but they were not. "Your lordship's father was lord; you are *also* lord, but I doubt if you are *likewise*."

Clerk was of a convivial disposition and a member of the Bannatyne Club, invariably attending the anniversary dinner, at which, until within a year of his death, Sir Walter Scott took the chair. He only occupied his position as Lord of Session for five years, resigning in 1828, when he was succeeded by Lord Fullerton. He was a bachelor and formed such an attach-

ment to cats that his democratic establishment could always boast of at least half a dozen feline dwellers. When at home he was invariably to be found with a favourite cat seated upon his shoulder, purring about his ears. He passed away at his house in Picardy Place, Edinburgh, on 30th May 1832. In the following March his library and enormous collection of prints, engravings, portraits, and pictures was sold by public auction, the sale being marred by a serious fatal accident, which occurred by reason of the floor of the room giving way.

JOHN, DUKE OF ATHOLL

Among those holding office in Edinburgh Masonry at the time of Burns's visit was the Duke of Atholl, 32nd Grand Master Mason of Scotland, with whom, in 1787, Burns stayed for two days at Blair-Atholl. In 1791 he was elected Grand Master of the Ancients in England and installed at a Grand Communication held in London, at which the Duke of Leinster and General Oughton were present as representing the Grand Lodges of Ireland and Scotland.

THE EARL OF BUCHAN

Another Edinburgh acquaintance of the poet was David, sixth Earl of Buchan, a frequent visitor to Lodge Canongate Kilwinning, who was born in 1742 and succeeded to the title and estates in 1767. In the previous year he had been appointed Secretary to the British Embassy in Spain, but returned to his native land on the death of his father. He aided materially in the formation of the Society of Scottish Antiquaries in 1780. He was 34th Grand Master Mason of Scotland in 1782 and 1783. It was during his reign that the privilege of carrying the mallet in all processions of Grand Lodge was vested in the senior member of the Lodge of Journeymen, Edinburgh, a privilege which, by sufferance, came to be extended to carrying the other working tools. Grand Lodge afterwards restricted this privilege to Edinburgh and neighbourhood. The Earl of Buchan acquired Dryburgh Abbey by purchase and there he instituted an annual festive commemoration of the author of *The Seasons* (a fellow-Freemason), the first meeting of which was held at Ednam Hill on 22nd September 1791, on which occasion he crowned a copy of the first collected edition of Thomson's

writings with a wreath of bays. On that occasion he attacked the great English lexicographer "by whose rude hands the memory of Thomson has been profanely touched." Burns wrote his beautiful lines, "Address to the Shade of Thomson" for the occasion. The Earl was a man of considerable gifts, to whom Burns addressed one of his most remarkable prose compositions.

SIR JAMES HUNTER BLAIR

Sir James Hunter Blair, the first Baronet, born on 21st February 1741, was a banker in Edinburgh, in partnership with Sir William Forbes, Lord Provost of and M.P. for Edinburgh. He was the son of James Hunter of Mainholm. In 1770, he married Jane, daughter and heiress of John Blair and, in 1777, he assumed the additional name of Blair. His father acquired considerable property in land and money. He was admitted, along with Sir William Forbes, his fellow-clerk, to a share in Coutts' banking business and rose gradually to be head of the concern. He was created a Baronet of Great Britain in 1786, two years after his election as Lord Provost of Edinburgh, in which office he carried out several important

improvements. Amongst others, he was successful in getting a new bridge built over the Cowgate, the foundation stone of which was laid on 1st August 1785, with great solemnity, by Lord Haddo, Grand Master Mason of Scotland, with Masonic honours. Hunter Square and Blair Street were named after him and his estates and titles were inherited by his son, Sir David Hunter Blair, who was printer to His Majesty. Sir David Hunter Blair was Treasurer of the Grand Lodge of Scotland in 1783 and was one of the many notabilities who paid marked attention to the poet.

SIR WILLIAM FORBES

Sir William Forbes, of Pitsligo, *Bart.*, became Grand Master Mason in 1776. He was initiated in Lodge Canongate Kilwinning in 1759, was Junior Grand Warden of Scotland from 1765 to 1769 and, as 31st Grand Master, presided over the Grand Lodge of Scotland from December 1776 to 1778. He continued a regular attendant at Grand Lodge for many years after vacating the chair. He was the son of Sir William Forbes, *Bart.*, Advocate, succeeding to the title when only four years old. In his fifteenth year he was introduced into the banking

firm of Messrs. John Coutts & Company, in Edinburgh and, in 1761, was admitted a partner. He erected the High School, in which Sir Walter Scott and other eminent men were educated. He was a zealous manager of the Royal Infirmary and did much for the Lunatic and Blind Asylums. He established a spinning school at Pitsligo, introduced the linen manufacture and erected a bleachfield. In 1784, he became a member of the Merchant Company, was elected Master in 1786, a situation he was afterwards frequently called upon to fulfil. He was Treasurer of the Antiquarian Society from 1780 until he passed away on 12th November 1806.

MAJOR WILLIAM PARKER

Major William Parker, of Assloss, Master of Lodge St. John, 22, Kilmarnock, a banker, became one of Burns's principal friends and a subscriber for thirty-five copies of the first edition of his *Poems*. In 1802, he succeeded to the estate of Assloss, about two miles out of Kilmarnock. He is the "Willie" in the song "Ye Sons of Auld Killie"—a contraction for Kilmarnock. It is said to have been composed by Burns on the occasion of his admission as an honorary member of the Lodge.

“ Ye sons of Auld Killie, assembled by Willie,
 To follow the noble vocation ;
 Your thrifty old mother has scarce such another,
 To sit in that honoured station.

I’ve little to say, but only to pray,
 As praying’s the *ton* of your fashion,
 A prayer from the muse, you well may excuse,
 ’Tis seldom her favourite passion.

Ye powers who preside o’er the wind and tide,
 Who mark each element’s border ;
 Who formed this frame with beneficent aim,
 Whose sovereign statute is order.

Within this mansion may wayward contention
 Or withered envy ne’er enter ;
 May secrecy round be the mystical bound
 And brotherly love be the center.”

The original of the song has the following note attached to it :

“ This song, wrote by Mr. Burns, was sung by him in the Kilmarnock Kilwinning Lodge in 1786 and given by him to Major Parker, who was Master of the Lodge.”

THE HON. HENRY ERSKINE

On the same night that Burns visited Lodge Canongate Kilwinning—7th December 1786—he wrote to his friend, Gavin Hamilton :

“ My Lord Glencairn and the Dean of Faculty, Mr. H. Erskine, have taken me under their wing ; and, by all probability, I shall soon be the tenth worthy and the eighth wise man of the world. I have met in Mr. Dalrymple of Orangefield what Solomon emphatically calls a ‘ friend that sticketh closer than a BROTHER.’ ”

Henry Erskine also deserves the last appellation, for he did much to further the interests of the poet, who wrote concerning him :

“ Collected, Harry stood awee,
 Then open’d out his arm, man ;
 His lordship sat wi’ rueful e’e
 And ey’d the gathering storm, man ;
 Like wind-driv’n hail, it did assail,
 Of torrents owre a lion, man ;
 The Bench sae wise, lift up their eyes,
 Hauf wauken’d wi’ the din, man.”

THE EARL OF GLENCAIRN

James, Earl of Glencairn, received the poet at Coates, when he visited Edinburgh in 1786, he having recently sold his Kilmaurs Estate. He was unmarried and the Countess of Glencairn, frequently referred to by Burns, was the widow of the predecessor. Burns handed Lord Glencairn a letter of introduction from his (the Earl’s)

cousin, James Dalrymple, which urged strongly the claims of the Ayrshire Bard, with whose writings, however, the Earl was already acquainted through his factor, Alexander Dalziel, at Finlayson. The Earl introduced Burns to Creech, his future publisher. When Burns first made the acquaintance of Lord Glencairn, he wrote :

“ The noble Glencairn took me by the hand to-day and interested himself in my concerns with a goodness like that benevolent being, whose image he so richly bears. He is a stronger proof of the immortality of the soul than any that philosophy ever produced. A mind like his can never die.”

The following quotation from Burns’s *Diary* is also of interest :

“ The noble Glencairn has wounded me to the quick here, because I dearly esteem, respect, and love him. He showed so much attention, engrossing attention, one day to the only block-head at table (the whole company consisted of his lordship, dunderpate, and myself), that I was within half a point of throwing down my gage of contemptuous defiance ; but he shook my hand and looked so benevolently good at parting. God bless him ! Though I should never see

him more, I shall love him to my dying day.”

Burns never did forget him; he put on mourning at his death, and afterwards named one of his sons James Glencairn Burns.

Lord Glencairn’s younger brother and successor, John, married Isabella Erskine, daughter of David Henry, Earl of Buchan, and so was the brother-in-law of the Earl of Buchan and the Hon. Henry Erskine.

Of his patron, Burns wrote :

“ The bridegroom may forget the bride
Was made his wedded wife yestreen ;
The monarch may forget the crown
That on his head an hour has been ;
The mother may forget the child
That smiles sae sweetly on her knee ;
But I’ll remember thee, Glencairn,
And a’ that thou hast done for me.”

JAMES DALRYMPLE

James Dalrymple, an enthusiastic Freemason, was the first to welcome Burns to Edinburgh and to introduce him to the social life of Auld Reekie. The poet had hoped to meet in Edinburgh his old friend, William Wallace, Sheriff of Ayrshire and Professor of Scots Law in the

University, but he passed away suddenly on the very day of Burns's arrival. Dalrymple, however, took him in hand and introduced him to several influential men of the city. Burns wrote concerning him :

“ I have found a worthy, warm friend in Mr. Dalrymple, of Orangefield, who introduced me to Lord Glencairn, a man whose worth and brotherly kindness to me I shall remember when time shall be no more.”

He also introduced him to the Hon. Henry Erskine, advocate, Whig, wit and Past Master. James Dalrymple is described as “ a warm-hearted man, an enthusiastic Freemason, a too enthusiastic sportsman and an occasional writer of verses.” He was connected with John Ballantine in the laying of the foundation stone of the new Ayr brig with Masonic honours. Of Dalrymple, Burns afterwards wrote: “ They have ta'en awa’ Jamie, the flow’r of them a’.”

“ SOUTER JOHNNIE ”

John Lauchlan, a shoemaker in Ayr and a member of Newton St. James Lodge, 165, became the Tyler of Lodge Ayr St. Paul, 204—a Lodge founded, in 1799, by Freemasons serving

in the Ayrshire Militia. He is said to be the “Souter Johnnie” portrayed in the famous poem, “*Tam o’ Shanter*” :

“ But to our tale.—A’e market nicht,
Tam had got planted unco richt,
Fast by an ingle, bleezing finely,
Wi’ reaming swats that drank divinely,
And, at his elbow, Souter Johnnie,
His ancient, trusty, drouthy cronie ;
Tam lo’ed him like a very brither,
They had been fou for weeks thegither.
The night drove on wi’ sangs and clatter,
And aye the ale was growing better ;
The Landlady and Tam grew gracious,
Wi’ secret favours, sweet and precious ;
The Souter told his queerest stories ;
The Landlord’s laugh was ready chorus ;
The storm without might rair and rustle,
Tam did na mind the storm a whustle.”

The future Souter was born in the parish of Alloway and he and the poet were close companions in boyhood. Afterwards, he removed with his companions to Ayr, where he was bound apprentice to a shoemaker. He was known in and about Ayr as “Souter Johnnie” to his dying day. His remains were interred with Masonic honours.

“ Souter Johnnie’s ” son, John Lauchlan, was a Freemason of sixty-five years’ standing when

he was called to his eternal rest, in his eighty-sixth year, on 16th September 1862. He was initiated in Lodge Ayr St. James, 163, in which Lodge he also received the degrees of Royal Arch and Knight Templary. He was one of the original members of Lodge Ayr St. Paul and was delegated by his brethren-in-arms to receive from the Grand Lodge of Scotland the charter of the newly-formed Lodge. This document he carried in his knapsack to Stirling, where the Militia then lay. In the Court Hall of that town, early in the year 1800, the oil of consecration was poured out upon the altar of the Lodge of the Ayr and Renfrew Militia by the office-bearers of Lodge Ancient, Stirling. John Lauchlan became Master of the Lodge in 1805 and the like honour was conferred upon him at other periods in its history. So highly were his services appreciated that, in 1808, he was presented with a handsome silver medal, in the name of the Lodge, "as a tribute of esteem and mark of respect towards him for his laudable conduct while Master, for his attention to its interests and prosperity, and for his spirited exertions in supporting its dignity and maintaining its independence." He bequeathed his diplomas and Masonic papers, together with the Masonic relics of his father, to

Andrew Glass, a Past Master of Lodge Ayr St. Paul. He was buried in Alloway Kirkyard, near to the “winnock bunker in the east,” and within a few yards of the resting-place of the poet’s father.

ROBERT BURNS AND HIS PUBLISHERS

JOHN WILSON, who published the first edition of Burns's *Poems*, is credited by Archibald M'Kay, in his *History of Kilmarnock*, with setting up the first printing-press in Ayrshire and with, in conjunction with a brother, commencing, in 1803, the *Ayr Advertiser*, the first newspaper published in the county. Later, Wilson entered into partnership with the Rev. Hamilton Paul, who, like himself, was an enthusiastic Freemason and the latter officiated as editor of the paper for three years. Wilson was a member of Lodge St. John, 22, Kilmarnock, in which he was initiated on 13th April 1784. Several members of this Lodge were subscribers to the first edition of the *Poems*. In consequence of Burns's pecuniary difficulties, Wilson refused to undertake the printing and publishing of the *Poems* unless guarantors for the cost were forthcoming. He afterwards declined to publish a second edition unless £27, the cost of the paper, was paid to him in advance. One of the sureties

for the cost of the printing of the first edition was William Hamilton, of Craigshaw, a Doctor of Medicine, who resided in Kilmarnock. He was the relative of William Hamilton, a minor Scottish poet and the friend and correspondent of Allan Ramsay. William Hamilton (the surety) was the author of two books, written over the name of Henry the Minstrel. Concerning these, Burns wrote :

“ The first two books I ever read in private and which gave me more pleasure than any two I have read since, were the *Life of Hannibal* and the *History of the Acts and Deeds of Sir William Wallace*.”

The story of how the publication of the first edition of the *Poems* was brought about is told by James Paterson in *The Contemporaries of Burns*. John Goldie, or Goudie, to whom Burns addressed the poem beginning :

“ Oh, Goudie ! terror of the Whigs,
Dread of black coats and rev'rend wigs”—

is claimed by some as the earliest patron of the Ayrshire ploughman. He was much older than Burns, having been born at Craighill, where his ancestors had been millers for nearly four hundred years, in 1711. He, however, became,

first, a cabinetmaker and, afterwards, a wine and spirit merchant, the latter occupation proving more remunerative to him than the former. He travelled from Calvinism to Deism, by way of Arminianism, and he became notorious in consequence—so widely known, says Paterson, that :

“ It would have been surprising had the author of the much-reprobated essays escaped the attention of Burns, who was then, it must be said, only beginning to form his estimate of Society and its institutions. Goldie was exceedingly accessible and the poet had seen him more than once in his house in Kilmarnock. One day the author of the *Essays* had occasion to be in the neighbourhood of Mossgiel ; he called in passing and, in the course of his stay, Burns and he sallied out to the fields, where, sitting down behind a stack of corn—for it was the reaping season—the poet read over one or two of his manuscript poems. Goldie was highly delighted with the pieces, expressing his astonishment that he did not think of printing them. Burns at once unbosomed his circumstances—he was on the eve of setting out for the West Indies and Wilson would not run the hazard of publication. ‘ Weel, Robin,’ said Goldie, ‘ I’ll tell you what to do. Come your

wa's down to Killie some day next week and tak' pot luck wi' me. I ha'e two or three guid frien's that'll be able to set the price a-going.' Burns was, of course, true to his appointment, and, after dinner, they were joined in a bowl or two of toddy by the friends whom his entertainer had purposely invited. Among these were the town clerk, Mr. Paterson, of Braehead; Dr. Hamilton, of Kilmarnock Place; Major Parker, of Assloss, then banker in Kilmarnock; Dr. William Moore; Mr. Robert Muir, wine merchant, etc. In the course of the evening, Burns read several of his pieces; and, so delighted were the company, that they at once became security to Wilson for the printing of the work. Thus was Goldie the immediate means of bringing the Bard into notice. During the printing of his volume, Burns was almost a daily visitor to Goldie's house, where he corrected most of the proof-sheets and wrote not a few of his letters."

It was Wilson who suggested to Burns the placing of a piece of a grave nature at the beginning of his poems and, in the walk home one night, from Kilmarnock to Mossgiel, Burns composed "The Twa Dogs." The site of the Burns Monument at Kilmarnock, erected in the Kay Park in August 1879, is very appropriate,

as it overlooks what was once the little printing-office of the printer of the first Kilmarnock edition of his *Poems*. There is in the Kay Park a museum for relics of Burns, in which are deposited several manuscripts. There are also several portraits of Burns, one believed to be by Nasmyth, but Nasmyth's original portrait of Burns is in the National Gallery at Edinburgh.

Opinion is divided as to who was the subject of the epitaph “*Hic Jacet Wee Johnnie*,” written by Burns. Some contend that he was a worthless character, well known in Mauchline; others that the lines refer to John Wilson, the publisher and were written because he refused to publish the second edition of the *Poems* unless security against loss was given. The epitaph reads :

“ Whoe'er thou art, oh, reader, know
That Death has murder'd Johnnie !
And here his body lies fu' low—
For saul he ne'er had any.”

In explanation of Wilson's conduct, however, for he has frequently been blamed, it must be remembered that the poet had not abandoned his intention of leaving Scotland and his works were regarded by many as impious and immoral.

It was to John Ballantine that Burns was indebted for the publication of the second edition

of his *Poems*. When he heard that the poet was prevented from publishing a second edition because of the lack of money to purchase the paper, he generously offered to accommodate Burns with the sum needed, but advised him to go to Edinburgh as the fittest place for publishing. This advice was corroborated by the Rev. Dr. Blacklock, who had already made the acquaintance of Burns's poetical compositions through the introduction of Professor Dugald Stewart and Dr. Lawrie, both Freemasons. The latter had sent a copy of the Kilmarnock edition of the *Poems* to Dr. Blacklock, who, in writing to acknowledge the gift, said :

“ Many instances have I seen of Nature's force and beneficence exerted under numerous and formidable disadvantages, but none equal to that with which you have been kind enough to present me. There is a pathos and a delicacy in his serious poems, a vein of wit and humour in those of a more festive turn, which cannot be too much admired nor too warmly approved. I think I shall never open the book without feeling my astonishment renewed and increased. It were much to be wished, for the sake of the young man, that a second edition, more numerous than the former, could immediately be printed,

as it appears certain that its intrinsic merit and the exertions of the author's friends might give it a more universal circulation than anything of the kind which has been published within my memory."

Through the kind offices of his Masonic Brethren, Burns made a quick and profitable acquaintance with the nobility and *literati* of the Scottish capital, obtained an appointment in the Excise and was placed in possession of a farm. Among the Masonic acquaintances which he made was William Creech, who became the publisher of the second, or Edinburgh, edition of the *Poems*.

William Creech, a remarkable man, was born at Newbattle, near Edinburgh, on 21st April 1745. His ancestors were poor but respectable farmers in Fife, but his father was the Rev. William Creech, minister of Newbattle, his mother an Englishwoman, whose maiden name was Mary Buley. The future publisher was educated under Dr. Robertson, minister of Kilmarnock, who was also private tutor to the sons of the Earl of Glencairn, with whom he contracted an intimate friendship. Creech afterwards proceeded to the University of Edinburgh and studied with the view to entering the medical

profession, but, instead, he became apprentice to Mr. Kincaid, a bookseller, who traded in partnership with John Bell, under the title of Kincaid & Bell. Creech remained with this firm until 1766, when he went to London. In 1770, he made an extensive tour through the continent of Europe with Lord Kilmaurs, the eldest son of the Earl of Glencairn, who succeeded to the peerage on 9th September 1775, while he has become so well known as the patron and friend of Burns. Creech also afterwards made a lengthy continental tour on his own account and, in 1771, on the dissolution of the partnership between Kincaid and Bell, he entered into partnership with his old employer and friend and the firm continued under the name of Kincaid & Creech, an arrangement which lasted until 1773, when Kincaid withdrew, leaving Creech in sole possession.

Creech was also an intimate friend of Lord Kames and the publisher, not only of Burns's *Poems*, but also of the works of Dr. Blair, Dr. George Campbell, Dr. Cullen, Dr. Gregory, Henry Mackenzie, Lord Woodhouselee, Dr. Adam Ferguson, Professor Dugald Stewart and Dr. Adam Smith—most, if not all, prominent in the annals of Freemasonry in Scotland—and

others. Creech was one of the original members of the Speculative Society of Edinburgh, instituted in 1744, for improvement in literary composition and public speaking. He lived to see the celebration of the jubilee of the society, which occurred a few weeks before his death, but, unhappily, he was unable to attend the gathering because of the decline in his health. He was Lord Provost, or Chief Magistrate, of Edinburgh from 1811 to 1813. His breakfast-room became a kind of literary lounge, which was known as "Creech's Levee," concerning which Burns has written :

"Nae mair we see his levee door
Philosophers and poets pour,
And toothy critics by the score
In bloody raw;
The Adjutant of a' the core,
Willie's awa'."

Creech was also an original member of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, to which he was the official bookseller. He passed onwards on 14th January 1815, having nearly completed his seventieth year.

In 1782, Creech had entered into partnership with William Smellie, the trading name being Creech & Smellie. William Smellie was born

in 1740 in the Pleasaunce of Edinburgh, the son of Alexander Smellie, a prominent member of the Lodge of Edinburgh, 1, serving the office of Deacon in the United Incorporations of Mary's Chapel, an office precisely similar to that of Master of a London Livery Company. Both his father and grandfather were architects and possessed of considerable property at St. Leonard's, in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh. His father was also the builder of the Martyrs' Monument in the Greyfriars Churchyard, Edinburgh. William Smellie, the publisher, was entered in the Lodge of Edinburgh on 25th December 1759, passed and raised on 23rd December 1762, and the minutes read that :

“ In consideration of the honour Bro. Smellie has done the Lodge by the Oration on Charity, lately delivered in this Lodge and since printed, resolved that no fees shall be taken from him for advancing him to the degree of being a Master Mason.”

Creech referred to his connexion with the Lodge in the following letter to a friend :

“ I was lately appointed by the Society of Masons to give them a discourse on Charity. I hammered it over in my old way on Monday se'enight. I had the solatium of a long and

very loud clap. I wrote this same essay entirely out of my own imagination, without turning over a single leaf of a book. Hall Hunter [the Rev. Dr. Henry Hunter who, when on a visit to London, preached at several of the Scots meeting-houses, particularly those of Swallow Street and London Wall, who, afterwards, received an invitation to Swallow Street, which he refused. In 1771, however, he became minister of the Scots' Chapel in London Wall. He was a renowned public orator, and died at Bristol on 27th October 1802, aged sixty-one] heard it, so that if you chuse to learn anything further of it, you may consult him. It has been shown to several persons and, among the rest, to no less a man than the Earl of Leven! Wonderful! I am strongly solicited to print for the amusement of the town.”

The Oration was printed and 2500 copies speedily sold.

Smellie was accounted the most learned printer of his day and he was one of the principal contributors to the *Edinburgh Magazine and Review*, which would not have become a failure had it been entrusted to his calm and judicious control. The partnership between Creech and Smellie continued until 31st December 1789, after which

Smellie carried on the business on his own account.

Burns introduced Mrs. Maria Riddell, of Woodley Park, to Smellie. She was the authoress of *A Voyage to the Caribbee Islands*, also of *A Critique of Burns's Works*, while she rendered material assistance to Dr. Currie, when writing the *Biography of Burns*. The friendship which was initiated with that introduction continued until the death of Smellie.

Smellie introduced Burns to the Club known as the Crochallan Fencibles, composed mainly, if not altogether, of literary men and Burns has described Smellie's commonly unkempt appearance in the following lines :

“ To Crochallan came
The old cock'd hat, the brown surtout, the same,
His bristling beard just rising in its might,
('Twas four long nights and days to shaving night)
His uncomb'd grizzly locks, wild staring, thatch'd
A head, for thought profound and clear, unmatch'd ;
And, tho' his caustic wit was biting, rude,
His heart was warm, benevolent, and good.”

In a letter to Peter Hill, an Edinburgh bookseller, Burns wrote :

“ I know that you are no niggard of your good things among your friends and some of them

are much in need of a solace. There, in my eye, is our friend Smellie, a man positively of the first abilities and greatest strength of mind, as well as one of the best hearts and keenest wits that I have ever met with. Can you see him, as, alas ! he, too, is smarting at the pinch of distressful circumstances, aggravated by the sneer of contumelious Greatness ! A bit of my cheese alone will not sure him ; but if you add a tankard of brown stout and superadd a margin of right Oporto, you will see his sorrows vanish like the morning mist before the summer sun ! ”

Smellie was also renowned as a natural historian, winning a gold medal for a *Dissertation on the Sexes in Plants*, in which he opposed the teachings of Linnæus.

His publishers were among the most intimate friends of Burns and their company alone would give the lie to the statement, sometimes maliciously made, that his boon companions were of the low and inebriate class.

GILBERT BURNS: BROTHER OF THE POET

GILBERT BURNS was initiated, passed and raised in Lodge St. James, Tarbolton, on 1st March 1786 and, for a time, at least, took an active part in the affairs of the Lodge. His name appears in the *Minute Book* on five separate occasions between 11th December 1786 and 21st December 1787. He occupied the chair on two occasions when the Lodge met at Mauchline on 18th and 20th November 1788. In July 1787 he had a loan from the Lodge of £6, 5s.—a not uncommon practice in those days—which he repaid in June 1788.

It is to Gilbert that we are indebted for many of the particulars relating to the poet's early life and for the clearance of many unfounded charges brought against him in the later period of his life. The twain were the aptest and favourite pupils of John Murdoch, who passed away in London in 1824 at the age of seventy-seven years. Murdoch opened his school at Alloway

in a small room in May 1768 and though, about a year afterwards, William Burness, the father, left Alloway for Mount Oliphant, two miles distant, Robert and Gilbert still continued their attendance and did so for about two and a half years. Murdoch has written concerning them :

“ Together they were generally at the upper end of the class, even when ranged with boys by far their senior. Gilbert always appeared to me to possess a more lively imagination and to be more of the wit than Robert. . . . Robert’s countenance was generally grave and expressive of a serious, contemplative and thoughtful mind. Gilbert’s face said, ‘ Mirth, with thee I mean to live ’ and, certainly, if any person who knew the two boys had been asked which of them was the more likely to court the Muses, he would never have guessed that Robert had a propensity of that kind.” (Currie, vol. i. p. 89.)

The two boys had no companions of their own age. Indeed, as Gilbert says, their father was, for some time, their only companion and he used to converse with them as though they were grown up. After the Burns family had lived at Mount Oliphant for two years,

Murdoch went away and the boys, being engaged at work on the farm during the day, their father instructed them and their sisters in arithmetic in the evenings by candle-light.

Gilbert was possessed of uncommon bodily strength and, according to Robert, appears to have become an adept in the threshing of corn by the time he was thirteen years of age and, at the age of fifteen, he was the principal labourer on the farm. Each brother was allowed an annual wage of seven pounds, but the value of any home-made clothes received by them was deducted. When the removal to Mossgiel was made, three months before the father's death, the wages of the two brothers still stood at seven pounds.

Dr. C. Rogers, in the *Book of Burns*, tells us that by ranking as a creditor of his father for the stipulated wages at Lochlea farm, Gilbert was, in conjunction with his brother, enabled to retain a portion of farm stock and, therewith aided by the savings of other members of the family, to take another lease of the farm from Gavin Hamilton. Together the brothers struggled hard, but could not overcome the difficulties of the situation until Robert was

enabled to lend his brother the money to discharge the debts. The farm at Mossgiel, says Dr. Rogers, was first held by the poet on a sub-lease from Gavin Hamilton, who, himself, rented it from the Earl of Loudoun, but, in March 1784, the poet associated Gilbert with him in the lease. Three years later he retired from the concern and, on Whitsunday, 1788, Gavin Hamilton conveyed the lease to Gilbert and proposed that the poet should become security for the rent. Robert, however, emphatically declined, but not from any want of confidence in his brother, as will be seen from the following letter :

“ The language of refusal is to me the most difficult language on earth and you are the man in the world, excepting one of right honourable distinction, to whom it gives me the greatest pain to hold such language. My brother has already got money and shall want nothing in my power to enable him to fulfil his engagement with you ; but, to be security on so large a scale, even for a brother, is what I dare not do, except I were in such circumstances of life that the worst that might happen could not greatly injure me. I never wrote a letter which gave me so much pain in my life, as I know the

unhappy consequence: I shall incur the displeasure of a gentleman for whom I have the highest respect and to whom I am deeply obliged."

Gavin Hamilton, however, renewed the lease without security and the friendly relations were not disturbed.

The letters that passed between Robert and Gilbert are, says Lockhart, among the most precious in the collection; for there could be no disguise. The brothers had almost entire knowledge and confidence in each other; of that there can be no doubt. The plain, manly, affectionate language in which they both write is truly honourable to them and to the parents that reared them.

One of the most interesting of the epistles is that written on 1st January 1780, when Gilbert wrote to his brother:

"I have just finished my New Year's Day breakfast in the usual form, which naturally makes me call to mind the days of former years and the society in which we used to begin them; when I look at our family vicissitudes 'through the dark postern of time elapsed,' I cannot help remarking to you, my dear brother, how good the God of Seasons is to

us ; and that, however some clouds may seem to lour over the portion of time before us, we have great reason to hope that all will turn out well."

Two years after Gilbert took sole possession of the farm, he was induced by Mrs. Dunlop to take temporary charge of Morham Muir, a farm in the neighbourhood of Haddington, which formed a part of her family estate. His own farm at Dunning, which he retained till 1810, he entrusted to the management of John Begg, husband of his sister, Isabella. In 1804 he accepted the factorship of Lord Ballantyre and, in the spring of that year, he established his residence at Grant's Braes, near Lethington, Haddingtonshire, where he brought his mother and his sister, Annabella, where they all lived together. As factor he had a free house, with a salary of £100, which, subsequently, was raised to £140.

At one time, Gilbert courted Jean, the elder daughter of William Ronald, farmer at Bennals, in the parish of Tarbolton, who, with her sister, is the subject of the poet's song, "In Tarbolton, ye ken, there are proper young men"; but she preferred the suit of John Reid, a farmer at Langlands and, on 20th June 1791, Gilbert

married Jean Breckenridge. Jean inherited from her parents certain house property in Fore Street, Kilmarnock. Her mother, Janet Aird, was the only child of John Aird, farmer at Sorn and, later, a merchant at Kilmarnock. James Breckenridge was her first husband and David Sillar, farmer, of Symington, near Kilmarnock, was her second husband. Sir James Shaw, *Bart.*, a native of Kilmarnock, Lord Mayor and Chamberlain of London, was David Sillar's nephew. It was through his exertions—for he constituted himself the protector of the Burns family—that each of the three sons of the poet got a start in life: Robert, the eldest, as will hereafter be seen, secured a position in the Stamp Office; James Glencairn was nominated to Christ's Hospital; and both he and his brother, William Nicol, obtained Indian cadetships.

Mrs. Carlyle, in her *Letters*, recalls a happy time she spent with the Burns family at Grant's Braes, when she often shared their lunch, which consisted generally of rice and currants, in not too liberal helpings.

Gilbert's eldest son, Tom, became a student at the University and Theological Hall in Edinburgh and, in due time, was ordained. He was

appointed to the churches of Monks and Prestwich, where he built a large church and manse, regarded at first as a white elephant, but, when the church became crowded with worshippers, was known as “Burns’s Wisdom.” In 1837, however, he gave up his church and sailed with four hundred men, women, and children to New Zealand. On arrival at the Otago coast, they had to undertake the work of pioneer building and there arose the township of New Edinburgh, which name was afterwards changed to Dunedin, which is the Celtic for Edinburgh. Dunedin is now, of course, the capital of the South Island. It was through the influence of the church founded by Tom Burns—or Dr. Thomas Burns, as he had now become—that the University of Dunedin was founded and the poet’s nephew became the first Chancellor. In the city are two statues—one to Robert Burns, the other to the Rev. Dr. Thomas Burns, its founder.

Gilbert passed away at Grant’s Braes on 8th April 1827, at the age of sixty-seven years. He was buried at Bolton Churchyard, the burying-ground of the Lennox family. He had trained up a family of six sons and five daughters and given all his boys what is generally described

as a good education. Gilbert resembled his brother in countenance, save that he had an aquiline nose, while Robert had a straight one. He was possessed of a vigorous intelligence and no inconsiderable literary culture. He largely assisted Dr. Currie in preparing his brother's *Memoirs* and edited one edition of the poet's works, published in 1820 by Cadell & Davies, adding a *Dissertation of the Effect produced by Scottish Presbyterianism on the Scottish National Character*. For this edition he received £500 from his publishers, which enabled him to hand on to the poet's widow the £180 the poet had lent him thirty-two years previously.

Lockhart says of Gilbert :

“ Through life and in death he maintained and justified the promise of his virtuous youth and seems, in all respects, to have resembled his father, of whom Murdoch, long after he was no more, wrote : ‘ O for a world of men of such dispositions ! I have often wished for the good of mankind that it were as customary to honour and perpetuate the memory of those who excel in moral rectitude as it is to extol what are called heroic actions.’ ”

It was Gilbert who introduced David

Sillar, of the “Epistle to Davie” fame, not only to the poet, but to all the family and, after Robert’s death, presented to Allan Cunningham the poet’s punch bowl of Inveraray marble.

THE BROTHERS BURNS AND THE MAUCHLINE CLUB

THE Mauchline Conversation or Debating Society, which was founded in October 1786, seems to have owed its inception to Robert and Gilbert Burns. Intimate knowledge of the Society is due to the discovery, in 1892, by John Love, junior, of the original *Minute Book* in the “back country” in New South Wales. He wrote an account of how it came into his possession in the *Kilmarnock Standard* of 25th June 1892. It appears from that account that he met a squatter named William Fisher, who produced a book which he said he had received from a Manchester man in Victoria. “The rules of the Society,” said Mr. Love, “savour more of the douce and moderate spirit of Gilbert Burns than of the soaring and fervent genius of the elder brother, Robert.”

The poet’s name does not appear in the list of original members and Gilbert, whose name comes second on the list, seems to have been

the moving spirit among this Mauchline coterie, a faithful and regular partaker in the discussions to which the monthly meetings were devoted. The absence of Robert's name is easily accounted for. The Club started on its career at the time when Robert was mourning the loss of Mary Campbell and when he was contemplating emigration : it was what might be described as the " mirkiest hour " in the night of his troubles. The formation of the Club occurred at the same time that the poet wrote the pathetic letter to Robert Aitken.

Judging from the minutes, the Club was purely a literary one. The members met once a month " in the house of Charles Paton or any other public-house in Mauchline they shall think convenient for the purposes of conversation on a given thesis or question which may be on an innocent subject." The receipts seem to have been expended mainly on books and newspapers, instead of in potations, as had been the rule with the Tarbolton Club. The members purchased regularly the *Mirror* and the *Lounger* (which Gilbert once told Dr. Currie were his favourite books), Rousseau's *Emilius*, Voltaire's *History of Peter the Great*; *The American Wanderer*; and Sir John Sinclair's *Statistical*

Account of the Survey of Scotland, in five volumes. One of the rules of the Society was :

“ Every member who shall betray the secrets, contemn the laws, or otherwise by his conduct become disagreeable to the Club, shall be excluded from all its privileges or any right in its property.”

Although the *Minute Book* ends on 20th November 1797, Dr. Currie, writing in 1800, said that the Club was still in existence and it figured in the list of subscribers to his edition of Burns’s Works.

Gilbert Burns was president and opener of the discussions on several occasions, some of the dates and subjects being as follows :

2nd January 1787: Whether a man that engages no further in the world than will afford him a livelihood, or him that runs as far as power and opportunity will admit, is most likely to be happy.

30th August 1787: Whether Love in the present state of Society is productive of most happiness or uneasiness.

26th November 1787: Whether if the labouring part of mankind were to educate themselves on the strictest principles of economy, or in

their present mode of action, it would be better for Society in general.

7th November 1788 : Whether a girl will be more happy to have her mind cultivated in the best manner, or to receive the education common to her station in life.

20th June 1789 : Whether there is not a certain time of life that a man should marry, or after that time he should give up all thoughts of marrying or not.

22nd February 1790 : Whether, in a young man looking out for a wife, he ought to have more regard for her fortune or her personal charms.

12th June 1791 : Whether town or country life is more favourable for the improvement of youth.

(At this meeting the members agreed to purchase the *Spectator* and the *Man of Feeling*.)

21st January 1793 : Whether it is probable if a republican form of government were to take place, it would tend to more happiness for the present generation.

13th July 1795 : Whether, in educating a young man for the world it is better to repress or encourage the natural warmth of his feelings.

In the course of a long letter to Dr. Currie, on 24th October 1800, Gilbert Burns referred to the books he recommended to the Mauchline Club and the effects of refinement of taste on the labouring classes of men.

ROBERT BURNS, JUNIOR, AND OTHER DESCENDANTS

IT, perhaps, is not known generally that the eldest son of Robert Burns, the sweet singer of Scotia, Robert Burns the Second, ten years of age when his father was called away, also became known in Masonic and literary circles. He was born at Mauchline on 3rd September 1786 and received a good education at the Academy of Dumfries ; spent two sessions at the University of Edinburgh and one at the University of Glasgow. Dr. Charles Rogers, who was acquainted with all the poet's sons, says that the Bard encouraged his son, Robert, to read the English and Scottish poets, which he did, but never spoke of his own contributions to literature and his son did not know that his father was a poet until after he had passed away.

In 1804, Robert Burns the Second obtained a situation in the Accompant-General's Department at the Stamp Office, London, this being

eight years after his father's demise, when he the son, was eighteen years of age. He remained at this post for twenty-nine years and, during the whole of that time, although on the best of terms, he never once saw his mother. The salary attached to that appointment was not a large one and it was supplemented by Robert by the undertaking of evening tuition in classics and mathematics. This became particularly necessary after 24th March 1809, when he married Anne Sherwood, one daughter only being the issue of that marriage. There is a reference to Robert in a letter written from London on 19th December 1823, by John Goldie, who had journeyed south in the hope of obtaining employment in the printing trade in London, wherein he says :

“ Called on R. Burns (son of the poet) at the Stamp Office. Little black-looking fellow, resembling the portraits of his father a good deal. In manner rather repulsive and cold—thought him a scion almost unworthy his parent tree. Promised to call on Monday.”

In 1833, having earned and obtained a super-annuation allowance of £150 a year, Robert went immediately on a visit to his mother at Dumfries and, eventually, decided to make his residence

in that northern city. It was not until his retirement that he sought admission into the Masonic ranks. On 22nd August 1833, he was initiated in the Old Lodge of Dumfries, now known as Dumfries Kilwinning, 53, and, says the *Minute Book*, "it was agreed, as a mark of respect to his illustrious descent, to elect him without payment of the usual fees." In 1838 there was an exhibition at Lodge St. Michael Kilwinning, 63, Dumfries, of "several manuscripts of the poet and, amongst others, the original of "The Cottar's Saturday Night." The minute says that "the Lodge was much delighted with the inspection thereof." At this meeting Robert Burns the Second was present and signed the attendance book. In the following year, he again attended Lodge St. Michael, as one of a deputation from Lodge Dumfries Kilwinning. In 1840, he was also one of the representatives of his Lodge on the occasion of the laying of the foundation stone of Thornhill Church.

There is another record of interest in the *Minute Book* of Lodge Dumfries Kilwinning, on 14th February 1842, which runs that "Brother Robert Burns (the Clerk) stated to the Lodge the kind and generous manner in which our

Sister Lodge, the Eskdale Kilwinning, had received him. It was ordered that the Clerk should record in the book of Dumfries Kilwinning Lodge that the Lodge drank with the truest Masonic feeling and fervour to the Prosperity of our Sister Lodge, the Eskdale Kilwinning."

When Queen Victoria visited Edinburgh on 3rd September 1842, for the purpose of laying the foundation stone of the Royal Victoria Hall for the General Assembly, the members of Lodge Dumfries Kilwinning accepted the hospitality of Lodge St. Mary's Chapel, 1, Edinburgh and the two Lodges, thus uniting, occupied a distinguished place in the procession. Then the minute proceeds :

" Brother Burns favoured the Lodge with a song of his own composition in honour of the Queen's visit to Scotland."

This song has been preserved in the *Minute Book*, in the handwriting of the author and, thanks to James Smith, the historian of the Lodge, it can now be reproduced. It is called :

“ THE GATHERING OF THE SLIOCHD DHIARMID
TO WELCOME THE BEAN RIGH,

or

THE GATHERING OF THE RACE OF DERMID (THE CAMPBELLS)
TO WELCOME THE QUEEN

Air : ‘ Maccallum More’s Gathering of the Sons of
Dermid ’—‘ The Campbells are Coming.’

Ye sons of Clandermid ! away ! away !
Ye sons of Clandermid ! away ! away !
The beacons are blazing from Forth to Tay,
Ye sons of Brown Dermid ! away ! away !

The Lady of Kingdoms comes bright on her path,
Let the banners wave proudly o’er mountain and strath,
Let the Sunbeam of Dermid ¹ exult in the gale
That sweeps the grey mist of the morn from the vale.

The Queen of the Islands, she comes from her throne,
Her realms are an hundred, her people are one,
At the Halls of her fathers, by bonnie Tay’side,
Clanhay and Clandrummond receive her in pride !

Descend from the hills of the swift-bounding roe,
But not from the battle, the spear and the bow,
Descend in the tartan that knows not a stain,
With liberty’s fervour and loyalty’s flame.

Let the steel of your sires gleam on Tay’s morning wave,
The steel of the mighty, the steel of the brave,
From stately St. Johnston ² to Bonny Dundee,
Clandermid ! Clannmurray ! the fearless and free.”

¹ The Standard of the Chieftain Macallummore.

² The ancient name of Perth.

In 1845, Robert Burns the Second was installed as Master of his Mother Lodge, but, in 1848, from some mysterious and unexplained cause, though, apparently, in a prosperous condition, the Lodge, which had met continuously for one hundred and sixty years, became dormant, and was not revived until 1874.

Robert was the principal mourner at his mother's interment on 1st April 1834. He himself was called to the Grand Lodge Above on 14th May 1857, at the age of seventy-one and his remains were conveyed to the vault of his father's mausoleum. He is described as possessing the dark eyes, large head and swarthy complexion of his father; and as having much more than the average mental capacity. He wrote many verses, but his principal bent was towards geometry. His three sons, by a second marriage, grew up to manhood. The Rev. George Gilfillan wrote of him :

“ He was intellectual, a capital mathematician, and resembled his father, much alike in strength and weakness.”

Robert Burns the Third, son of Robert Burns the Second, married Mary Campbell and, for some thirty years, kept a private school at Dumfries, where he passed away in 1879.

Robert Burns the Fourth, eldest son of the foregoing, settled in the village of Blackhall, near Edinburgh, where he eked out a precarious existence. He was educated in his father's school. He enlisted in the Scots Fusiliers, in which he served for some twelve years, being quartered successively at London, Dublin, Shorncliffe and elsewhere. On leaving the army, he became a labourer until he obtained the keepership of the City of Edinburgh's gunpowder magazine at Blackhall, at a wage of £45 a year, with a free house and garden. He married Jane Palmer, daughter of a farmer at Kirkoswald, near Dumfries.

William Nicol Burns, second son of the poet, entered the Madras Infantry and attained the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel. He died in London in 1872 and was also buried in the Burns Mausoleum. He was married, but left no family.

James Glencairn Burns, third son of the poet, so named after his father's noble friend, emigrated to the East and became a judge and collector at Cahar. He died in 1865 and was buried at Dumfries. He left two daughters—Sarah Maitland, who married Dr. Hutchinson and had three daughters and a son—and Annie

Burns Burns, who settled at Cheltenham and did not marry. She passed away at Cheltenham on 10th May 1925 in her ninety-fifth year. The father obtained his position in the East India Company through the influence of Sir James Shaw and the Marchioness of Hastings. On 17th September 1831, on his return home from India, he, with his wife, paid a visit to Sir Walter Scott and spent the day under his roof, shortly before the demise of the great Scottish novelist.

Betty Burns, daughter of the poet and Anne Hyslop, of the Globe Tavern, Dumfries, whose charms were celebrated in “Gowden Locks of Anne,” regarded by the poet as the best love song he ever wrote, was born on 31st March 1791, died in 1875 and was buried in the old burying-ground at Pollokshaws, near Glasgow. The inscription on the stone runs: “Betty Burns, 83, daughter of the poet, Robert Burns, 1875.” She married a weaver named Thomson. Chambers says that she was the only one of the poet’s children who bore a strong resemblance to her father.

THE MAN WHO SAVED BURNS FOR SCOTLAND :
THOMAS BLACKLOCK, D.D.

THOMAS BLACKLOCK was born at Annan, Dumfries, on 10th November 1721. His parents, who were natives of Cumberland, were of the poorer class—his father was a bricklayer—but industrious and well informed. Before Thomas Blacklock was six months old, an attack of small-pox deprived him of his eyesight, and, from that time, his father seems to have made it his principal aim to lessen this terrible calamity by all the means in his power. His hours of freedom from labour were devoted to reading to his son and he enlisted the friendly offices of neighbours in the same work during the day, when he was unable to be at home. By this means the blind boy became acquainted with the works of Spenser, Milton, Prior, Pope, Addison, Thomson and Allan Ramsay, while he also acquired some knowledge of the rudiments of the Latin language. He also acquired a love for poetry and, at the age of twelve years,

began to compose imitations of some of the authors whose works had been read to him, while he even essayed some original compositions.

Even in his first poem, he gave evidence of the mildness of temper for which he was noted throughout his life. There is an analogy between him and Burns, whom, in later years, he befriended, in the fact that the first composition of the great Scottish Bard, at the age of fifteen years, was to a girlish companion. Blacklock's first composition was to a girl about his own age—"To a Little Girl whom I had offended"—urging her to avoid shrewishness :

" Should but thy fair companion view
How ill that frown becomes thy brow,
With fear and grief in every eye,
Each would to each, astonished, cry :
‘ Heavens, where is all her sweetness flown ?
How strange a figure she has grown !
Run, Nancy, let us run, lest we
Grow pettish, awkward things as she.' "

It was certainly a composition not to be despised as the production of a boy of only twelve years of age and might even be classed as remarkable to find a sightless boy of that age discoursing upon the probabilities of sight.

The daily acquisition of knowledge and the frequent composition of poems continued until

Thomas Blacklock attained the age of nineteen years, when a second great misfortune overtook him. The father, whom he had loved so dearly, and who had lavished such care upon him, was accidentally and suddenly killed by the fall of a lime-kiln. Of that father he wrote in his “Soliloquy” :

“ Where now, ah, where is that supporting arm
Which to my weak, unequal, infant steps
Its kind assistance lent ? Ah, where that love,
That strong, assiduous tenderness, which watch'd
My wishes yet scarce form'd ; and, to my view,
Unimportun'd, like all-indulging Heav'n,
Their objects brought ? Ah, where that gentle voice
Which, with instruction, soft as summer dews
Or fleecy snows, descending on my soul,
Distinguish'd every hour with new delight ?
Ah, where that virtue, which, amid the storms,
The mighty horrors of tumultuous life,
Untainted, unsubdued, the shock sustain'd ?
So firm the oak which, in eternal night,
As deep its roots extend, as high to heaven
Its top majestic rises : such the smile
Of some benignant angel, from the throne
Of God despatch'd, ambassador of peace,
Who, on his look impress'd his message bears
And, pleas'd, from earth averts impending ill.
Alas, no wife thy parting kisses shar'd ;
From thy expiring lips no child receiv'd
Thy last dear blessing and thy last advice.
Friend, father, benefactor, all at once,

In thee forsook me, an unguarded prey
 For every storm, whose lawless fury roars
 Beneath the azure concave of the sky,
 To toss and on my head exhaust its rage."

On the death of his father, he gave way, for a time, to despondency. He was deprived of the stay on which he had hitherto rested and the fate of a homeless beggar sometimes presented itself as one that might befall him :

" Dejected prospe&t ! Soon the helpless hour
 May come—perhaps this moment it impends—
 Which drives me forth to penury and cold,
 Naked and beat by all the storms of heaven,
 Friendless and guideless to explore my way ;
 Till on cold earth this poor, unsheltered head,
 Reclining vainly from the ruthless blast,
 Respite I beg and, in the shock, expire."

He lamented his blindness. He realized to the full the limitations which his affliction placed upon him :

" The sacred fane

Of knowledge, scarce accessible to me ;
 With heart-consuming anguish I behold ;
 Knowledge for which my soul insatiate burns
 With ardent thirst. Nor can these useless hands,
 Untutor'd in each life-sustaining art,
 Nourish this wretched being and supply
 Frail nature's wants, that short cessation know."

He continued to live with his mother for a year after his father's death, when there happened to him that tide "which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune." At the time of his father's death, which occurred in 1740, Blacklock's poems had been issued only in manuscript form; but they had already secured a wide circulation and some of them fell into the hands of Dr. Stevenson, an eminent physician of Edinburgh. In 1741, at the request of Dr. Stevenson, Blacklock went to Edinburgh and, after a short course at the Grammar School there, proceeded to Edinburgh University, where he remained until 1745. Then the rebellion broke out and the poet returned for a time to Dumfries, where he found an asylum with his married sister, Mrs. M'Murdo. At the termination of the rebellion he went back to Edinburgh, where he pursued his studies for a further six years, acquiring, among other stores of learning, a thorough knowledge of Greek, Latin, and French. The cost of this training was defrayed by Dr. Stevenson, to whom Blacklock afterwards dedicated his "Imitation of the Ode to Mæcenas," which occupies the first place in his *Poems*, as it does in those of Horace.

While in Dumfries, he composed the following poem for the Lodge there, of which he became a member :

“ Though bigots storm and fools declaim,
And Masons some, through ign’rance, blame,
The good, the just, the learn’d, the wise,
Freemasonry will ne’er despise.

O’er all the earth let Masons join
To execute one grand design
And strike amazement into fools,
Who laugh at Masons and their tools.

On Justice, Truth, and Charity
This edifice shall founded be ;
And we’ll combine to rear the whole
By Wisdom’s just, unerring rule.

Let ev’ry Mason then prepare
By virtue’s mould his work to square :
And ev’ry task adjusted be
By the level of equality.

Let jollity and freedom then
For ever in our Lodge remain,
And still our work cemented be
By universal harmony.

This structure we will fortify
With the barrier of secrecy ;
A Mason-barrier we may boast
Shall e’er impenetrable last.

To mutual love and friendship rais'd,
This fabric shall by all be prais'd ;
And those who strive to ridicule
Our Craft, shall but themselves befool."

The first edition of Blacklock's poems had been published in Glasgow in 1746 and, in 1754, the second edition was published in Edinburgh, an edition appearing also in London in the same year, with a biographical notice of the author by the Rev. Joseph Spence, the Oxford Professor of Poetry. A subscription was opened immediately at the shop of Dodsley, a well-known publisher of that period, for a quarto edition to be published at a guinea for large paper and at half a guinea for small paper copies. Blacklock, meanwhile, had made the acquaintance of Hume, the historian, who assisted in promoting the sale of this edition, which yielded the author a considerable sum. Further editions appeared in 1786, 1793, and 1796.

Blacklock, however, did not limit his literary efforts to poetry. In 1756, he published *An Essay towards a Universal Etymology* and he was also the author of the article on the Blind in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, while he translated from the French a work on the *Education of the Blind*, by Valentine Hauy, the founder of the Paris

Blind School. Although not inaugurated in Blacklock's lifetime, it was through his persistence that some prominent Edinburgh residents established the Edinburgh Asylum for the Relief of the Indigent and Industrious Blind. In 1786, also, he published a translation from the French of two discourses on *The Spirit and Evidence of Christianity*, by the Rev. James Ramared, minister of the Walloon Church in Hanau.

Blacklock had intended at the termination of his University course to give lectures in elocution to students intended for the Bar or the Church, but Hume dissuaded him from this undertaking. Probably the reason behind Hume's action was the fact that, in the dictation of his poems, Blacklock had acquired a vibratory sort of motion with his body, owing mainly to his inability to walk about unaided in consequence of his blindness. He refers to this habit in the poetic pen-picture he has drawn of himself :

“ As some vessel tossed by wind and tide
Sounds o'er the waves and rocks from side to side,
In just vibration thus I always move.”

On the abandonment of that idea, Blacklock determined to study Divinity and, after the

usual probationary course, he was, in 1759, licensed as a preacher of the gospel, according to the constitution of the Church of Scotland.

In 1762, Blacklock married Sarah Johnston, daughter of Joseph Johnston, a surgeon in Dumfries and, about the same time, he was ordained minister of the town and parish of Kirkcudbright—a presentation from the Crown, obtained for him by the Earl of Selkirk. The parishioners, however, objected strongly to the appointment and, after a legal dispute, lasting nearly two years, his friends advised him to resign his right and accept a moderate annuity in its stead. He returned to Edinburgh in 1764, when he adopted the plan of receiving a limited number of students in his house.

Whether it was the outcome of his decision to enter the ministry, or some other cause, cannot be stated, but his intimacy with Hume was severed and, by a singular coincidence, he became acquainted with Hume's opponent, Dr. Beattie, with whom he inaugurated a friendship, to be severed only by death. Beattie was Professor of Moral Philosophy at Aberdeen and had written, besides poems, philosophical works designed to defend religion and morals

against the sceptical theories enunciated by Hume. It is believed that it was owing to the influence of Dr. Beattie that the University of Aberdeen conferred upon Blacklock the degree of D.D., in 1767, the same year that he published *Paracelsus*. In the preceding year, he had sent a copy of his poems to Dr. Beattie, who returned to him a poetical epistle, which, afterwards, was prefixed to his *Poems*. Part of it reads as follows :

“ Who longs to emulate thy tuneful art ;
But more thy meek simplicity of heart ;
But more thy virtue, patient, undismay'd,
At once though malice and mischance invade,
And not by learned nor priestly pride confined
Thy zeal for truth and love of human kind.”

This love of human kind was a prominent trait in Blacklock and there were several notable instances of it in his career. He engaged a boy from a village near Carlisle, for the purpose of leading him about. Perceiving in this youth a willingness to learn, he taught him Latin, Greek, and French and, eventually, secured for him the position of secretary to Lord Milton, then Lord Justice Clerk and sub-Minister for Scotland under the Duke of Argyll. This young man was named Richard Howitt, who afterwards

wrote the poem entitled “Roslin Castle,” a work of much promise, which he dedicated to Dr. Blacklock. Unhappily, the fatigue of the employment caused damage to his health and he died in 1794.

But the greatest debt that is owed to Dr. Blacklock is the fact that he saved Burns to Scotland, and, perhaps, to literature. He was one of the first to appreciate the genius of Scotia’s famous Bard. Dr. George Lawrie, of Loudoun, a man of high culture and character and on terms of intimacy with the leading Scottish *littérateurs*, had been struck with the excellence of Burns’s poems. He thought that the author was too great a man to pine in provincial obscurity, or to expatriate himself to a pestilential climate, as he proposed to do. Burns, as a means of escape from his many troubles, had accepted a position which had been offered to him in the West Indies. His passage to Jamaica had been booked. He had written his “Farewell,” when there came to hand a letter from Dr. Blacklock, which caused him to change his mind and remain in Scotland. To quote Burns’s own words :

“ I had just taken the last farewell of my few friends ; my chest was on the road to Greenock ;

I had composed the last song I should ever measure in Caledonia ; when Dr. Blacklock's opinion that I would meet with encouragement in Edinburgh for a second edition fired me so much that I posted away to that city."

When Burns arrived in Edinburgh, says Dr. Currie, Blacklock received him with all the ardour of affectionate admiration ; he introduced him eagerly to the respectable circle of his friends ; he consulted his interests ; he emblazoned his fame ; he lavished upon him all the kindness of a generous and feeling heart, into which nothing selfish or envious ever found admittance.

"Dr. Blacklock," said Burns, "belonged to a set of critics for whose applause I had not dared to hope. His opinion that I would meet with encouragement fired me so much that away I posted for that city, without a single acquaintance or a single letter of introduction. The baneful star that had so long shed its blasting influence on my zenith for once made a revolution to the nadir." Walker, in his *Biography of Burns*, said :

"It was a fortunate circumstance that the person whom Dr. Lawrie applied to, merely because he was the only one of his literary acquaintances with whom he chose to use that

freedom, happened also to be the person best qualified to render the application successful. Dr. Blacklock was an enthusiast in his admiration of an art which he had practised himself with applause. He felt the claims of a poet with a paternal sympathy and he had in his constitution a tenderness and a sensibility that would have engaged his beneficence for a youth in the circumstances of Burns, even though he had not been indebted to him for the delight which he received for his works ; for, if the young men were enumerated whom he drew from obscurity and enabled by education to advance themselves in life, the catalogue would naturally excite surprise.”

The intimacy between Burns and Blacklock was broken only by the death of the patron and, in October 1789, less than two years before that event, we find Burns addressing a poetic epistle to Dr. Blacklock from Ellisland, beginning :

“ Wow, but your letter made me vauntie!
And are you hale, and weel, and cantie?
I kenn’d it still your wee bit jauntie
 Wad bring you to ;
Lord send you are as weel’s I want ye,
 And then ye’ll do.”

Not only in the case of Burns, but in many other instances, we find that Blacklock exemplified in his life the principles enunciated in his own "Hymn to Benevolence":

"Hail, source of transport, ever new;
Whilst thy kind dictates I pursue,
I taste a joy sincere;
Too vast for little minds to know,
Who on themselves alone bestow
Their wishes and their care.

Daughter of God, delight of man,
For thee felicity began,
Which still thy hand sustains;
By thee sweet peace her empire spread,
Fair Science raised her laurel head
And Discord gnash'd in chains.

If from thy sacred paths I turn,
Nor feel their griefs while others mourn,
Nor with their pleasures glow;
Banished from God, from bliss and thee,
My own tormentor let me be,
And groan in helpless woe."

Small wonder that it was said of Blacklock that he never lost a friend nor made a foe. Heron wrote of him in the *Edinburgh Magazine*:

"There was, perhaps, never one among all mankind whom you might more truly have called an angel upon earth as Dr. Blacklock.

He was guileless and innocent as a child, yet endowed with manly sagacity and penetration. His heart was a perpetual spring of overflowing benignity. His feelings were all tremblingly alive to the sense of the sublime, the beautiful, the tender, the pious, the virtuous ; poetry was to him the dear solace of perpetual blindness ; cheerfulness, even to gaiety, was, notwithstanding that irremediable misfortune, long the predominant colour of his mind. In his latter days, when the gloom might otherwise have thickened around him, hope, faith, devotion the most fervent and sublime, exalted his mind to heaven and made him maintain his wonted cheerfulness in the expectation of a speedy dissolution."

Sir William Forbes said :

" With Dr. Blacklock I had the happiness of being well acquainted and I look back with gratitude to his memory for the most instructive hours which I enjoyed in his company."

Dr. Johnson met Blacklock on two occasions and, in a letter which he wrote to Mrs. Thrale on 17th August 1773, he said :

" This morning I saw at breakfast Dr. Blacklock, the blind poet, who does not remember

to have seen light and is read to by a poor scholar in Latin, Greek, and French. He was originally a poor scholar himself. I looked on him with reverence."

An incident in connexion with this breakfast has been placed on record by one who was a boarder in Dr. Blacklock's house at that time. It is that Dr. Johnson drank nineteen cups of tea on that occasion. The writer goes on to say :

" I was twice in company with Dr. Johnson, when he came to Edinburgh on his journey from the Hebrides. Being then a boarder in Dr. Blacklock's, my request to be present at the breakfast to Dr. Johnson was readily granted. The impression which I then received of him can never be effaced ; but it was not of an unpleasant nature. He did not appear to me to be that savage which some of my college companions had described him : on the contrary, there was much suavity and kindness in his manner and address to Dr. Blacklock. The blind poet generally stood in company, rocking from one side to another ; he had remarkably small white hands, which Dr. Johnson held in his great paws during the most part of the time that they conversed together, caressing and stroking

them as he might have done those of a pretty child."

Dr. Johnson, it may be mentioned, is generally accredited with the authorship of a laudatory notice of Dr. Blacklock, which appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine*.

In the circle of friendship, Dr. Blacklock seemed to forget his privation of sight and the melancholy which, at other times, it produced, entering with cheerful playfulness into all that went on around him. He had no earnest desire for anything except knowledge. He looked upon virtue as the cause of happiness to man and vice as the cause of his misery and his description of a guilty conscience is both poetical and just :

" In hopes his terror to elude,
By day, he mingles with the crowd :
Yet finds his soul to fears a prey,
In busy crowds and open day.
If night alone his walks surprise,
What horrid visions round him rise.
That blasted oak, which meets his way,
Shown by the meteor's sudden ray
(The midnight murd'rer's known retreat),
Felt Heav'n's avengeful bolt of late ;
The clashing chain, the groan profound,
Loud from yon ruined tow'r, rebound :

And now the spot he seems to tread
Where some self-slaughtered corpse was laid ;
Beneath his steps earth seems to bend ;
Deep murmurs from her cares ascend ;
Till all his soul, by fancy swayed,
Sees horrid phantoms crowd the shade.”

He had a very lofty conception of Deity :

“ Hail Sovereign Goodness, All-productive Mind,
On all Thy works Thyself inscribed we find :
How variously all, how variously endowed,
How great their number and each part how good,
How perfect then must the great Parent shine
Who, with one act of energy divine,
Laid the vast plan and finished the design.”

The poetical works of Thomas Blacklock possess solid merits, and will always repay perusal. There is no weak sentiment in any of his productions : the thoughts are vigorous and the expression intense. They were composed at a somewhat rapid rate and he would sometimes dictate as many as from thirty to forty verses as fast as an amanuensis could write them.

In his latter years he became afflicted with deafness, but his gentleness of temper never forsook him. In 1787, age and infirmity compelled him to retire from active life and, on 7th July 1791, he passed away in the seventieth year of his age, after about a week’s illness from

a feverish disorder. His remains were interred in the ground attached to St. Cuthbert's chapel-of-ease, where a monument has been erected to his memory, which bears an eloquent inscription from the pen of his friend and constant correspondent, Dr Beattie.

ROBERT FERGUSSON: THE INSPIRER OF BURNS

IF to Dr. Blacklock is to be given the credit of saving Robert Burns for Scotland and English literature, to Robert Fergusson must be awarded the credit for rekindling the muse in Scotia's famous poet. There is the authority for this statement in a letter written by Burns to Dr. Moore, when he said :

“ Rhyme, except some religious pieces that are in print, I had given up ; but meeting with Fergusson's *Scottish Poems*, I strung anew my wildly-sounding lyre with emulating vigour.”

The date of the birth of Robert Fergusson has frequently been given as 17th October 1750, but, from an entry in the Canongate parish register, it has now been placed beyond dispute that the correct date is 5th September of that year and that, as happened not infrequently at that period, he was baptized on the day of birth. The entry in the baptismal register reads :

“ 1750. Sept. 5. To William Fergusson, clerk to bailie Robert Baillie, merchant to the N.K.P., and Elizabeth Forbes, his spouse, a son named Robert : born same day.”

Robert was the third son and the fourth child of William Fergusson, a merchant’s clerk, who had in early life himself courted the Muses, and who had migrated from Aberdeen to Edinburgh to become the clerk to Mr. Robert Baillie, who was, at that time, the only haberdasher in the city. The post was not a highly-paid one ; he appears to have been in constant financial difficulties. The abode of the family was in an alley known as “ Cap-and-Feather Close ” and the house in which the family dwelt is described as a “ small old house, much smaller than the rest.”

It is not improbable that the lowly circumstances of the parents may account, in a great measure, for the fact that Robert was an extremely delicate child and could not be sent to school until his sixth year. It is evident, therefore, that his parents must have given him private instruction, for Robert had not been six months under his first teacher before he was deemed fit to be transferred to the High School and entered in the first Latin class. It may also be the fact

that he was assisted in his studies at home by his elder brother, Harry, nine years his senior, for, in December 1751—one year and three months after the birth of Robert—his father, writing to John Forbes of Roundlichnot, said :

“ Harry is well advanced in his Latine, exponing Ovid, M. and C. Nepos.”

Robert’s school life was greatly interrupted in consequence of bad health, though he succeeded in keeping abreast of his companions and, during his confinement in the house, developed a taste for general reading, the Bible being his favourite book. His primary education was brought to a termination by a two years’ course at Dundee Grammar School, which he entered in his twelfth year on a bursary. This bursary, which was the equivalent of an exhibition in an English university, also took him at the end of his course to the University of St. Andrews, where he matriculated in February 1765. While here, his talent for poetry was developed and it attracted the notice of both his tutors and fellow-students. On the death of Gregory, Professor of Mathematics, he wrote an elegy, in which respectful regret was mingled with satire :

“ Great ’casion had we a’ to weep,
 An’ cleed our skins in mourning deep,
 For Gregory’s death will fairly keep
 To take his nap ;
 He’ll till the resurrection sleep
 As sound’s a tap.”

He concluded with :

“ By numbers, too, he could divine
 That three times three just made up nine ;
 But now he’s dead.”

After Fergusson’s death, his nephew, James Inverarity, asked one of the University servants if he remembered Robert Fergusson. “ Bob Fergusson ! ” exclaimed the man ; “ that I do. Many a time I’ve put him to the door—ah ! he was a tricky callant, but a fine laddie for a’ that.”

Fergusson’s love for a frolic caused his appearance before the University authorities occasionally, when it was the duty of John Hogg, the porter, to summon him. It was of this porter that Fergusson wrote :

“ When I had been fu’ laith to rise,
 John then begune to moralize—
 ‘ The tither nap’—the sluggard cries
 And turns him round ;
 Sae spak’ auld Solomon the wise,
 Divine profound ! ”

Fergusson had a great love and talent for mimicry, and the following story was told of him in the *Edinburgh Literary Journal* :

“ An instance of this was communicated to me by the late Rev. Dr. James Brown, his fellow-student at St. Andrews, who was also a poet and who, from kindred delights and sympathies, enjoyed much of Fergusson’s society. On the afternoon of a college holiday, they took a walk together into the country and, after perambulating many farms and tripping with fraternal glee over field and hillock, they, at last, being desirous of a little rest, bethought themselves of calling at a small farmhouse, or pendicle, as it is named, on the king’s muirs of Denino. They approached the house and were kindly invited to a seat by the rustic and honest-hearted family. A frank and unceremonious conversation immediately took place, in the course of which it was discovered that a young person, a member of the family, was lying ill of a fever. The playful Fergusson instantly took it into his head to profess himself a medical practitioner. He started to his feet, begged to be shown to the sick-bed ; approached and felt the pulse of the patient ; assumed a serious air ; put the usual pathological interrogatories ; then

pronounced his opinion with a pomp and dignity worthy of a true doctor of physic. In short, he personated his assumed character so perfectly that his friend, Brown, though somewhat vexed, was confounded into silent admiration of his dexterity. On leaving the house, however, Brown expostulated with him on the indefensibility of practising so boldly on the simplicity of an unsuspecting family and of misleading their conceptions as to the cure of the distemper, by a stratagem, in which, however witty, neither of them could congratulate himself."

Fergusson was the possessor of an excellent voice, which caused him to be called upon often to officiate, more frequently than was agreeable to him, as precentor in the college chapel. Dr. Robert Chambers is the authority for the following story :

" His wicked wit suggested a method of getting rid of the distasteful employment, which he did not scruple to put into practice, though there was great danger that it would incense the heads of the college against him. It is customary in Scotland for persons who are in a dangerous state of illness, or who, by other 'necessary causages,' are detained from public worship, to give in a *line*, or written request, asking the

prayers of the congregation, which the precentor reads aloud immediately before the prayer. Fergusson, availing himself of this custom, rose up in the desk and, with the usual nasal solemnity of tone, pronounced, as if reading from a paper, this petition : ‘ Remember in prayer a young man (then present), of whom, from the sudden effects of inebriety, there appears but small hope of recovery.’ ”

Fergusson was, of course, reprimanded and was no more called upon to act as precentor. On another occasion, when tired of the sameness of the fare provided for the students and called upon to say grace, he repeated these lines :

“ For rabbits young and for rabbits old,
For rabbits hot and for rabbits cold,
For rabbits tender and for rabbits tough,
Our thanks we tender, for we’ve had enough.”

For this he escaped censure and fewer rabbits were afterwards supplied.

Early in 1774, Fergusson visited one of the eastern counties of Scotland, where he contracted a chill, the outcome of which, combined with the riotous scenes of an election, resulted in mental derangement. He recovered partially from his disorder, but the trivial caterwauling of a cat brought on a relapse. Again he recovered,

but a fall, in which he cut his head severely, did irreparable damage and he had to be removed to a public asylum, his mother being too poor to provide the necessary attention for him in his own home. He died on 16th October 1774, shortly after the completion of his twenty-fourth year. His grave was for many years neglected until, one day, Burns, on a pilgrimage, came to the place of his interment, when, uncovering his head and kneeling down, he embraced the venerated clay. He obtained permission from the bailies of the Canongate to erect a memorial stone over the grave, on which he inserted the following epitaph :

“ No pageant bearing here nor pompous lay,
‘ No story’d urn nor animated bust,’
This simple stone directs old Scotia’s way,
To pour her sorrows o’er her poet’s dust.

She mourns, sweet, tuneful youth, thy hapless fate,
Tho’ all the powers of song thy fancy fir’d ;
Yet luxury and wealth lay by in state ;
And thankless starved what they so much admir’d.

This humble tribute with a tear he gives ;
A brother bard, he can no more bestow ;
But dear to fame thy song immortal lives,
A nobler monument than art can show.”

Burns also wrote the following under the

portrait of Fergusson, in a copy of the author's works presented to a young lady in Edinburgh, 19th March 1787 :

“ Curse on ungrateful man, that can be pleas'd,
And yet can starve the author of the pleasure.
O thou, my elder brother in misfortune,
By far my elder brother in the Muses,
With tears I pity thy unhappy fate !
Why is the bard unpitied by the world,
Yet has so keen a relish of its pleasures ? ”

Wordsworth, Carlyle and R. L. Stevenson, among others, have been unstinting in their praise of Scotland's neglected poet, whose works are almost unknown to the present generation. In many instances they served as models for the greater poet, who was destined to follow him, and who achieved, after great struggle, a wider notoriety.

THE PASSING OF ROBERT BURNS

EARLY in January 1796, Robert Burns contracted the fatal chill which brought on an attack of fever. He was, however, able to attend a Lodge meeting on the 28th of that month and his earthly career did not terminate until 21st July in the same year, the fact being announced in the local paper in the following terms :

“ Died here, on the morning of the 21st inst. and in the thirty-eighth year of his age, Robert Burns, the Scottish Bard. His manly form and penetrating eye strikingly indicated extraordinary mental vigour. For originality of wit, rapidity of conception and fluency of nervous phraseology he was unrivalled. Animated by the fire of nature, he uttered sentiments which, by their pathos, melted the heart to tenderness or expanded the mind by their sublimity. As a luminary emerging from behind a cloud, he rose at once into notice and his works and his name can never die while living divine

Poesy shall agitate the chords of the human heart."

In his last illness, unable to remunerate his medical attendant in the usual manner, Burns asked the doctor's acceptance of his pair of pistols as a memorial of their friendship. Dr. William Maxwell proved a generous friend to the Bard's widow and children and retained those pistols until his death, which occurred on 13th October 1834. They were then preserved for some years by his sister and, on her death, they were presented to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, in whose Museum in Edinburgh they are now kept in an elegant coffer, but open to the inspection of the public. Allan Cunningham gives a description of the interview with Dr. Maxwell. Burns, he says, looked up one day and saw the doctor standing by his side. "Alas!" he said, "what has brought you here? I am but a poor crow and not worth plucking." He pointed to the pistols, took them in his hand and gave them to Maxwell, saying they could not be in worthier keeping and he should never more have need of them.

Allan Cunningham was one of the poet's ardent admirers and his sympathetic biography (though not always accurate) is one of the many

life stories of Scotia's national poet that has been written. This is not to be wondered at, for it was at the table of John Cunningham, in the farmhouse of Sandbed, that Burns first recited that glorious epic, "*Tam o' Shanter*," at the same time that one of his future biographers stood in the ingleneuk, listening with eager and sympathetic interest to the eloquence with which it rolled from the lips of its great author. Allan Cunningham supplies the following graphic description of the closing days of the poet's life :

" The last time I saw Burns in life was on his return from the Brow-well of Solway. He had been ailing all spring and summer had come without bringing health with it. He had gone away very ill and he returned worse. He was brought back, I think, in a covered spring cart, and, when he alighted at the foot of the street in which he lived, he could scarce stand upright. He reached his own door with difficulty. He stooped much and there was a visible change in his looks. Some may think it not unimportant to know that he was, at the time, dressed in a blue coat, with the undress nankeen pantaloons of the Volunteers and that his neck, which was inclining to be short, caused his hat to turn up

behind, in the manner of the shovel hats of the Episcopal clergy. Truth obliges me to add that he was not fastidious about his dress and that an officer, curious in the personal appearance and equipments of his company, might have questioned the military nicety of the poet's clothes and arms. But his Colonel was a maker of rhyme and the poet had to display more charity for the commander's verse than the other had to exercise when he inspected the clothing and arms of the careless Bard.

“From the day of his return home till the hour of his untimely death, Dumfries was like a besieged palace. It was known that he was dying and the anxiety, not of the rich and learned only, but of mechanics and peasants, exceeded all belief. Wherever two or three people stood together their talk was of Burns and of him alone; they spoke of his history—of his person—of his works—of his family—of his fame and of his untimely and approaching fate, with a warmth and enthusiasm which will ever endear Dumfries to my remembrance. All that he said or was saying—the opinions of the physicians (and Maxwell was a kind and skilful one) were eagerly caught up and repeated from street to street and from house to house.”

And the interment of the mortal remains of Robert Burns? Again one turns to Allan Cunningham for the best and most vivid description:

“ The multitude who accompanied Burns to the grave went step by step with the chief mourners ; they might amount to ten or twelve thousand. Not a word was heard ; and, though all could not be near and many could not see, when the earth closed on their darling poet for ever there was no rude impatience shown, no fierce disappointment expressed. It was an impressive and mournful sight to see men of all ranks and persuasions and opinions mingling as brothers and, stepping side by side down the streets of Dumfries, with the remains of him who had sang of their loves, joys, and domestic endearments, with a truth and a tenderness which none, perhaps, have seen equalled. I could, indeed, have wished the military part of the procession away—for he was buried with military honours—because I am one of those who love simplicity in all that regards genius. The scarlet and gold—the banners displayed—the measured step and the military array, with the sound of the martial instruments of music, had no share in increasing the solemnity of

the burial scene, and had no connexion with the poet."

The spot of ground in St. Michael's Church-yard, Dumfries, where all that was mortal of the Bard was deposited on Monday, 25th July 1796, had been selected by himself in the north-east corner of the cemetery. In one of his published letters we find him using this proud language :

" When I am laid in my grave, I wish to be stretched at full length, that I may occupy every inch of ground that I have a right to."

On 25th January 1820, the anniversary of his birth, at his birthplace, Kirk Alloway, was laid the foundation stone of a monument to the memory of Robert Burns. Dr. John Foulds has related a story with reference to this monument which is not generally known. When the idea of the monument was suggested, it was arranged that the Clerk of the County should convene a meeting in Ayr to discuss the matter. This was done, but only Alexander Boswell, of Auchinleck, the Rev. Hamilton Paul, of Broughton and the Clerk put in an appearance. That did not upset Boswell's equanimity. He calmly elected himself Chairman, proposed that a monument be erected, declared the motion carried and instructed the Clerk to send out

subscription sheets forthwith. These met with the heartiest reception, with the result that the monument was duly erected.

Alexander Boswell was the son of James Boswell, the biographer of Dr. Johnson. He was created a Baronet in 1821 and was shot in a duel in the following year by James Stewart, of Dunearn. In private life and in the circle of his friends he was one of the most social and amusing companions. He was much attached to Freemasonry and in a Lodge none could "preside o'er the Sons of Light" with greater propriety or more in the spirit of "the privileged few." He was a member of a family that traced its origin back to the days of William the Conqueror. Roger de Boswell, or Bosville, acquired the lands of Balmuto, in Fife, in the reign of David I and it is from this stock that the Auchinleck branch proceeds, these lands, forfeited to the Crown, having been obtained from James IV by Thomas Boswell, who was "slain in battle, fighting along with his sovereign at the fatal field of Flodden." He was the composer of many songs and it is a matter for regret that a complete edition of his works has never been published. After the death of Burns, the one object dear to Boswell's heart was the erection

of a monument that should be a suitable memorial and a testimony to future generations. He was Depute Grand Master of Mother Lodge Kilwinning and, in response to the appeal which he sent out, subscriptions had flowed in, including a handsome donation from the Prince Regent, afterwards George IV.

On the occasion of the laying of the foundation stone of the monument, the following Lodges and Chapters took part :

Mother Kilwinning.	163 Royal Arch, Ayr.
10 Maybole.	167 Thistle and Rose, Stevenston.
24 St. John, Kilmarnock.	197 Royal Arch, Maybole.
46 Newmills.	200 St. Thomas, Muirkirk.
64 Partick Kilwinning, Glasgow.	201 St. Clement, Riccarton.
123 Ayr Kilwinning.	203 St. Paul, Ayr and Renfrew.
124 St. James, Newton Ayr.	209 St. Andrew, Ayr Newton.
125 St. Andrew, Kilmarnock.	221 Moira, Fenton.
126 Thistle, Stewarton.	230 St. Barnabas, Old Cumnock.
131 St. David, Tarbolton.	240 St. Mungo, Mauchline.
147 St. Andrew, Irvine.	270 St. James, Kilmarnock.

In 1807, it may be stated, Lodge Mother Kilwinning renounced the right of granting warrants and was placed at the head of the roll of Scottish Lodges by the Grand Lodge of Scotland.

The Lodges and Chapters, having formed themselves into an extensive circle, the stone was placed into position by Alexander Boswell, who

also deposited a plate bearing the following inscription :

“ By the favour of Almighty God on the twenty-fifth of January, A.D. MDCCCXX of the era of Masonry, 5820 and, in the sixtieth year of the reign of our beloved Sovereign, George the Third, His Royal Highness George, Prince of Wales, being Regent of the United Kingdom and a munificent subscriber to the edifice, the foundation stone of this Monument, erected by public subscription in honour of the genius of ROBERT BURNS, the Ayrshire Poet, was laid by Alexander Boswell, Esq., of Auchinleck, M.P., Worshipful Depute Grand Master of the Most Ancient Mother Lodge Kilwinning (attended by all the Mason Lodges in Ayrshire), according to the ancient usages of Masonry. Thomas Hamilton, junior, Edinburgh, architect ; John Connell, junior, builder and contractor.”

Then the Depute Grand Master exhibited corn, oil and wine in true Masonic style and delivered the following address :

“ Brethren, may corn, oil and wine abound ; may all that is useful and ornamental be cultivated amongst us ; may all that can invigorate the body or cleanse the soul, shed their blest influence on our native land.

“ We have, at length, assembled to pay a grateful, though a tardy, tribute to the genius of Robert Burns, our Ayrshire Poet and the Bard of Coila. There surely lives not the man so dull, so flinty or phlegmatic, who would witness this event without emotion. But to those whose heart-strings have thrilled responsive to the chords of the poet’s lyre, whose bosoms have swelled like his, with love and friendship, with tenderness and sympathy, have glowed with patriotism or panted for glory—this hour must be an hour of exaltation. Whether we consider the time, the place, or the circumstances, at once in operation on our feelings and our fancies—his muse, alas ! is mute—who could alone have dared to paint the proud breathings of such an assembly at such a moment.

“ When we consider the time, we cannot forget that this day is the anniversary of that which gave our poet the light of heaven. Bleak is the prospect around us ; the wood, the hawthorn and ‘ the birken shaw ’ are leafless ; not a thrush has yet essayed to clear the furrowed brow of winter ; but this, we know, shall pass away, give place and be succeeded by the buds of spring and the blossoms of summer. Chill and cheerless was our poet’s natal day ; but soon the

wild flowers of poesy sprang, as it were, beneath his boyish tread ; they opened as he advanced, expanded as he matured, until he revelled in all the richness of luxuriance. Poverty and disappointment hung frowning around him and haunted his path ; but, soothed and charmed by the fitful visits of his native muse and crowned, as in a vision, with the holly wreath, he wantoned in a fairy land, the bright creation of his own vivid and enwrapt imagination. His musings have been our delight. Men of the loftiest talents and of taste the most refined, have praised them ; men of strong and sterling, but untutored intellect, have admired them : the poet of the heart is the poet of mankind.

“ When we consider the place, let us remember that those very scenes which we now look upon, awakened in his youthful breast that animating spark which burst upon the world with a blaze of inspiration. In yonder cottage he first drew breath ; in that depository of the lowly dead sleeps the once humble, now immortal, model of the cottage life—there rests his pious father—and there it was his fond and anxious wish that his dust should have been mingled with the beloved and kindred ashes. Below us flows the Doon, the classic Doon, but made classic by his

harmony ; there, gliding through the woods and laving his banks and braes, he rolls his clear and ' far-fetched waters ' to the ocean. Before us stands the ruins of Kirk Alloway, shrouded in all the mystic imagery with which it is enveloped by his magic spells—Kirk Alloway ! to name it is enough.

" If, then, the time and place are so congenial with our fond impressions, the circumstances which have enabled us to carry into effect this commemoration of our Bard must give delight to every enthusiastic mind. In every region where our language is heard, the song of Burns gives rapture—and from every region and from climes the most remote, the votive offerings pour in to aid all our undertaking ; and the edifice, which we have now begun, shall stand a proud and lasting testimony of the world's admiration. Not on the banks of the Doon alone, or hermit Ayr, or the romantic Lugar, echo repeats the songs of Burns, but, amid the wild forests of Columbia and scorching plains of Hindustan, on the banks of the Mississippi, the St. Lawrence and the Ganges, his heart-touching melody floats upon the breeze.

" This monument rises like the piled cairn over our warriors of old—each man casts a

stone ; and, in honour of him, the son of a cottager and himself a ploughman, our Prince, with the true feelings of true greatness and more illustrious by this act of generosity, pays here his tribute at the shrine of genius. May the work prosper ; and, when happily completed, then may it tell to future generations that the age which could produce a Burns was rich also in those who could appreciate his talents and who, while they felt and owned the power of his music, have honoured his name."

The Rev. Hamilton Paul concluded the ceremony with a suitable prayer and the whole Masonic body, joined by an immense crowd of spectators, gave three hearty cheers, and the procession returned to the town of Ayr.

The Rev. Hamilton Paul was himself a prolific poet from his earliest days and, at the University of Glasgow, he had for his college friend and intimate companion, Thomas Campbell, the author of the *Pleasures of Hope*. He was ordained to the ministry in 1800. Apart from his connexion with the Allowa' Club, to which reference has been made in these pages, he was appointed laureate to the Glasgow Ayrshire Friendly Society, whose annual meeting took place on Burns's anniversary. He presented

about a dozen odes to this Society, although he was present at only one of their meetings.

In the evening following the laying of the foundation stone in the morning, deputations arrived at the Grand Lodge, when Hamilton Paul recited the following ode :

“ Thy sorrows, Ayr, are like the dew of night,
 In pearly drops, o'er Nature's cheek descending,
 To bid her vernal beauty beam more bright,
 The tear and smile in lovely union blending ;
 For like the hymn of gratitude ascending
 With incense ever pleasing to the skies,
 Thine and thy darling poet's fame extending,
 Thou hear'st the voice of gratulation rise.

And lo ! on this auspicious holiday,
 The Sons of Light, in bright array,
 With many a mystic streamer flying,
 To minstrelsy with measured steps advance,
 And seem, at times, to weave the festive dance,
 At times, to shake the spear or couch the lance,
 To feet unhallow'd all access denying
 The while they place, by plummet, rule and square,
 The corner-stone, predestined to bear
 The precious monumental pile,
 Of Ayr the glory and the boast of Kyle.

Though frail the fabric which you raise,
 The poet's memory to prolong,
 Compar'd with that which speaks his praise,
 The energy divine of song ;

Yet still our gratitude is due,
Thrice lov'd, thrice honour'd friends, to you
Who bid the beauteous structure rise ;
And so our fond regrets were one,
When Coila wept her favourite son,
So in your joys we sympathize,
When the whole world of taste and feeling turns
Its gaze, with rapture ever new, on BURNS ! ”

Alexander Boswell also sang the following song, composed by himself, with great power and effect :

“ Vain thought ! But had Burns witness'd a meeting
Of souls so congenial and warm'd with such fire,
The wild flow of fancy in ecstasy greeting,
Ah ! what might have been the bold notes of his
lyre !

As rays by reflexion are doubled and doubled,
His bosom had swell'd to your cheering reply ;
Soft sympathy soothing the heart that was troubled—
A smile for his mirth—for his sorrow a sigh.

Admir'd but unaided, how dark was his story ;
His struggles we know and his efforts we prize ;
From murky neglect, as the flame bursts to glory,
He rose, self-embalm'd, and destruction defies.

A ploughman he was ; would that smile of false favour
Had never decoy'd him from home and his team ;
And taught all his hopes and his wishes to waver,
And, snatching reality, left him—a dream.

To rank and to title, due deference owing,
We bow, as befitting society's plan ;
But, judgment awaken'd and sympathy glowing,
We pass all distinctions and rest upon—man.

And from the poor hind, who, his day's task completed,
With industry's pride to his hovel returns,
To him, who in royalty's splendour is seated,
If soul independent be found—'twas in Burns.

His birthright, his muse ! Like the lark in the morning,
How blithely he caroll'd in praise of the fair ;
With nature enraptur'd and artifice scorning,
How sweet were his notes on the banks of the Ayr.

And near to that spot where his kindred dust slumbers,
And mark'd by the bard on the tablets of fame,
And near the thatch'd shed where he first lisp'd in
numbers
We'll raise a proud tribute to honour his name.”

EPILOGUE

NO anniversary is more zealously and joyously observed by Scots throughout the world than the 25th January, Burns's birthday, which is regarded as one of the most notable days in the Scottish calendar. Nor is the observance confined to Scotsmen. Burns, in his writings, appeals to all because he is the Poet of Humanity. He wrote of man's virtues and failings, of loving-kindness and of vice. He possessed the supreme gift of understanding and of sympathy. He was a Humanitarian and a Reformer and, as A. Bain Irvine said, in his Oration, delivered at the Scots Lodge of Freemasons, 2319, at the Burns's Nicht, held at the Holborn Restaurant, London, on 24th January 1929 :

“ His piercing vision enabled him to see at once and in startling clearness that equity,

fairness, to say nothing of humanity, must, indeed, all be but sickly plants in an atmosphere of repression where one class lords it over another and, in general, ‘Man’s inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn.’ ”

He embodied all that was best in the study of man as man and of nature in all its aspects. His variety is the greatest in the poetry of his time and he gave a fresh impulse to Scottish patriotism, while, at the same time, he set standards which appeal to the whole of the human family. He was the foe of bigotry, but he was, at the same time, intensely religious. In his *Commonplace Book*, he wrote :

“ The grand end of human life is to cultivate an intercourse with that Being to Whom we owe life, with every enjoyment that renders life delightful ; and to maintain an integrative conduct towards our fellow-creatures.”

Again, in his own words :

“ Religion has not only been all my life my chief dependence, but my dearest enjoyment. . . . A mathematician without religion is a probable character : an irreligious poet is a monster.”

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